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DEMOCRACY

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BY

SHAW DESMOND

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DEMOCRACY

I

THE RED SEED

"THAT, ladies and gentlemen, I take to be our reply to Socialist insolence. They have thrown down the red gauntlet to organised society . . . we, have taken it up."

The words came in florid periods, which rolled fluently from the loose-lipped mouth of the speaker. The good-humoured face, with the jaw of an East-End coster; short, pugnacious nose; the shrewd, luminous-grey eyes, which flickered athwart the packed rows like summer lightning; the burly frankness of the giant of a man in his loosely-caught frock coat—all went to make up the genial Buster Bull, financier, newspaper proprietor, sportsman, and People's Champion.

Denis Destin had seen him a score of times in the same Magog hall, dominating crowds of frightened, angry shareholders even as now he dominated the mass of city men, clerks, little tradesmen, and struggling professional men, ranged before him, hanging on each period. From where he sat near the platform, he caught the whitey-pallor and staring eyeballs of the faces that resurrected themselves at the trumpet blast of the chairman, feeling that the Judgment had come, their minds tense with battle.

It was after the General Election. Democracy, insistent, blatant, had asserted itself at the polls.

Labour sat in force in sacred Westminster. It was the beginning of the end.

Destin sensed in the faces before him what was called at the time "the Bitter Cry of the Middle Classes." Here, in the front, gnawing his nails, crouched a stock-broker, flirting daily with bankruptcy upon a couple of thousand a year, strained on the rack of an iniquitous tax. Cheek by jowl with him sat a little, stolid, ready-made-suited oilman, his heart aflame with the wrongs of a time where the oilman had to sell to a voracious public everything from strawberry jam to firewood in order to snatch a living from the wolves of the Chancellor. Twenty yards away, a City doctor, sprucely dressed in morning coat and "wing" collar, pondered the exorbitant rent of his city consulting rooms and nursed vengeance on the despoiler. Row upon row of city clerks—pale-faced, hard-working, and groomed to the last frayed thread of their shirt cuffs—thirty-shilling and two pound a week men—who, with their wives and little ones, hid their poverty behind the stuccoes of Finsbury Park or Forest Gate, felt the acid of frightened hate work its way in their pinched faces and bodies as they saw, standing out in concrete form before them, implacable Demos, corduroyed, hob-booted, reeking of sweat and envy.

Destin, himself one of the black-coated brigade, looked on in strange detachment. Indeed, as he hung there over the back of his chair, scanning the faces behind and around him, he seemed, despite his dark grey, precise clothes, identical with a hundred others, a curious incursion, with his strong nose, jutting from the heavily-boned brows, the square, rather small jaw, and great, loose shoulders.

Those were the men by whose side he worked day by day. He knew, none better, the dead grind of their lives, their little hopes and fears, but he felt himself cut off from them as effectively as though he lived on Saturn.

More than that, he hated them—hated them with a blind, tense hate which often puzzled him—hated them, not as individuals, but as the concrete manifestation of something behind them. Even as he looked, his hazel eyes greened as they narrowed—his rather sensuous mouth hung loosely open, the slaver of invisible froth running from it.

Destin, in the slang of the city, was "a queer fellow"—that epitaph of the middle classes, which puts a man outside the pale of Jungle Freedom in the City of Averages.

He swung round to the platform again, with its phalanx of respectable citizens, frock-coated and striped in the lower extremities with the insignia of success.

The new voice came to him thinly from the spare figure which ran up above him—a figure which, with its hollow asceticism and doleful moustaches, almost brushing either shoulder, was that of Don Quixote reincarnate.

That was Brink, the Lombard Street banker, whom Destin remembered very well indeed. The last time he had seen him was in the same hall, upon the Torrey-Alexander revivalist platform, when those two modern evangelists were, in their own language, picturesque and unrestrained as the country that gave them birth, "raising hell" in the City. Then, he had sung the "Glory Song" with a fine fervour, with a wrenching of spirit which brought the tears welling to his dim blue eyes, as he led the singing of a regenerated city.

You could not mistake those eyes. They swam unsteadily in twin pools of limpid white, each one with a tiny black iris that looked into the distances of the spirit. Now, bedewed with emotion, he made his appeal thinly:

". . . the voiceless chorus of the great Middle Classes of England goes up to Heaven, day and night. Ground out by the modern inquisitors, who pry not only into our

purses but into the sacredness of the home—urged on by a Government which, under the whip of the revolutionist, has long since lost all sense of proportion and of that sanity which, with the Bible, is the supreme heritage of the English people—these licensed pickpockets seek to rob us of our religion and our hard-earned savings at one and the same time."

There could be no mistaking the honesty of the man—his fanatical virtue—that fanaticism which Destin had first noticed at the Torrey-Alexander meeting. It was all very well for Bull to let a little smile run across his blunt, honest-looking jowl, as he nosed towards the speaker when he, the man of millions, had referred to "hard-earned savings" to a meeting which he could buy up, body and blood and bank balance, but Destin knew a sincere man when he saw him, and there was no mistaking Brink's sincerity. It was the deep-souled conviction of the "Glory Song" carried into the realms of £ s. d.

The meeting was silent. As he looked at them, Destin thought of hounds on an invisible trail. There was something lean and hungry and implacable about it—a sureness of the end of the tracking that irritated and frightened him. Anyhow, what business was it of his? Why did his heart beat faster? He was not a Socialist. He was a Democrat, and in his mind there was a nice difference. In his mind there were always nice differences. Yet that sureness irritated him. Brink irritated him—though he liked him too. The respectable men on the platform irritated him. But above all, Bull, with his eternal honesty of line, placarded on a thousand hoardings and mirrored in the halfpenny illustrateds, irritated him.

Destin felt that on him lay the dead mass of this respectability. The pressure was intolerable—the more intolerable that within him he felt that strange stirring—that restlessness of spirit which a doctor had once told

him was a tendency to hysteria . . . "the neurasthenia of the age." But was it?

". . . I am sure we are heartily indebted to Sir James Brink for championing the cause of us struggling tradesmen. I'm sure I speak from my 'art and from the 'art of thousands and thousands of others, when I say to him—'Thank you, Sir James, you have this day lighted a lamp in Hengland which the Red Flood shall not hextinguish. . . .'"

Destin looked at the little shrunken grey-bearded man in the shiny frock-coat, who in simple words tried to express the thanks of his heart. It was the voice of the little tradesman making itself heard as one of the non-coms. in the battle-front that was preparing. Bull's clarion call rang out in contrast. Brink's phrases had been those of the chaplain of the new army—the splendid flame of religious fanaticism which lifted the fight from the sordidness of self and pelf to the rarer strata of a Holy War—a Jehad that should be preached throughout the lands of the white peoples. And now there was another.

He had never heard that voice before, but he knew that never again would he forget it. It was beautifully modulated, with something of the hiss of the rapier underneath. Gentle as the waters of Lethe, it fathomed in its depths an undercurrent of acid disdain that held the ear enthralled. The word ran sibilant around the meeting—"Courcy—Courcy."

The name hissed itself from lip to lip, as the play of words sprayed gently upon the awakening ears. Men had craned forward, listening with eye as well as ear, Destin amongst the others. He felt that each syllable was of import—that nothing must be lost. "Courcy . . . Courcy."

Courcy—deadly, sweet-mouthed, vitriolic Courcy. Courcy—leader of the Opposition in the House. Courcy,

that gentle-mannered Prince of Politics, whose phrases crept like snakes through the chancelleries of Europe. Courcy — philosopher and mystic. Courcy—hated, loved, Courcy.

How sweetly he spoke now. "My friends, these are not the times, these dangerous, razor-edged times, for blind anger, for hasty words and hastier action. These are the times when above all others the statesman must be a philosopher, a man with a brain of ice and a heart of gold—yes, and I will say it—a man who carries in that heart the dread of interference with Destiny, implanted by the Divine Principle in Man, by whatever name we call it.

"Excellent as were the speeches to which I have just listened — sound and sane in tone and temper — there was, if I may be permitted to say so, one little thing lacking. The little thing that is known as the milk of human kindness.

"Let us say once and for all, at this, the beginning of what I conceive to be a Holy Crusade against the enemy of society, that some of our opponents at least are honest. Honesty is not the perquisite of any political party in the State. They, like us, are human beings of a common Creator. Blinded as they are—distorted as are their views—nay, even blasphemous and brutal as they are—let us never forget that they are human beings like ourselves, children of the Common Purpose they have distorted—wilful, erring children, whom, whilst we chastise, and chastise with the mercy of merciless justice, we shall remember may yet be brought to the ways of sanity and the pleasant paths of peace in the State.

"And when I say 'we,' I mean every loyal citizen, whether Liberal or Conservative. This is no time for academic distinctions of party—no time for a nice appraisement of the political and ethical values of the historic parties of the State. It is enough to know that

each honest man amongst us has to make his choice which he this day will serve—'God or Mammon'—the Principle of Righteousness, or that of envy, greed, and class hate. For, as my friend, Sir James Brink, has said —'The fight before us is something more than a fight for wealth and power—it is a fight for the Eternal Verities—it is the fight of a spiritual principle against the sordid materialism of our times.' We, at least, are on the side of the angels."

There was a spiritual uplifting in the face of the speaker, a tenseness of soul, moving loftily in the rarified strata of intellect, which made the men and women before him forget his well-known agnosticism, his gospel of philosophic negation—an uplifting which filled each heart there with a confused but none the less potent sureness that this war against the Red Peril was a Holy War, which barbed the shaft of smooth, formless hate with the hold-fast of religion. The first silence had passed into mutterings and thence had frothed itself into a flying spume of cheers which ended in a reverberation that shook the hall as the speaker threw out the phrase—"the side of the angels," a pledge of triumphant assurance in the battle to come.

Yet, Courcy's next words came chillingly. It was Courcy's way—a fatal way—the way of agnostic omniscience, which always ended on a note of pessimism.

"It is my duty to warn you, however, that the battle which is opening will be no affair of months or even a handspan of years. It is an Armageddon, which may outlast our time and the time of our children, or even of our children's children. The Red Seed has been sown unsparingly. It has been scattered by the sowers of blood into our newspapers, our homes, our ordinary social lives. It has fallen in dark, unconsidered places as well as in the light of day. It has been sown not only here in Britain but amongst the Latin and Teutonic

millions. It has been flung wide across the Atlantic to our kith and kin—to the Antipodes—yes, and even a sprinkling has fallen on the Yellow and Brown races—a sowing of dragon's teeth to bring up soldiers out of the ground, one day, perhaps, to challenge the supremacy of the White Race.

"It has fallen into the bowels of the mine, as on the desks of our city offices—it has run like the evil bindweed it is, underground through our Trade Unions—it has even found a roothold about the triple pillars of the State—the army, the navy, and the police. No man can say where next the red seed will be sown and the red harvest spring up.

"Yet, I believe that the resolution I am supporting here to-day, a resolution which has for its object the unification into an anti-Socialist federation of the forces of Liberalism and Conservatism, will, in these islands, be the nucleus of a burning, purifying nebula, which, in the political and social heavens, shall burn up and purify our country from the Red Seed and the Red Peril."

It was the speech known in the days to follow as the "Red Seed" speech.

The coldness that had fallen with Courcy's warning of the immensity of the issues opening out had once more given way to the thunderous cheers of a fanatical audience, sure in the righteousness and ultimate triumph of its cause.

"Will you take an amendment to the resolution, Mr. Chairman?"

The raucous voice cut like a buzz-saw across the stillness that had followed the cheers. It was Destin's.

Denis Destin had sat there speech after speech, all the neurasthenia of his soul rising like a miasma, his mind a hive of singing nerves. That splenetic irritation which was ever with him—that useless desire to action from which he was ever held in frozen impotence—all these

things were with him now. His irritation at the chairman, at Brink, at the little tradesman, had culminated in a sort of frenzy as Courcy finished his speech.

Thus it was that, for the first time is his life, he found himself on his feet as a speaker, scarcely conscious that he had risen, ignorant of what he was going to do now that he had got there, calling with a larynx that suffocated under the beatings of his heart—"Will you take an amendment to the resolution, Mr. Chairman?"

In his back he felt the thousands of eyes that focussed themselves upon him. Before him, he caught the amazement of the platform, the quick bending forward of the dapper little Secretary who whispered into the unheeding ears of Bull.

Bull at least was not startled. Bull knew every turn of the game of public meeting. Nothing could surprise the man who had weathered the storms of twenty-five years of hostile meetings.

For he knew that Destin was hostile. Every man and woman there knew he was hostile. The tall, threatening form—the forward-thrusting jaw—the inexorable nose—the bony forehead—the eyes that contracted as they gazed—the rebellion of straight dark brown hair that ran backwards over the square head—all proclaimed him an enemy within the gate.

Perhaps—and the consciousness of it burst upon the meeting simultaneously—he was a Socialist enemy. A low hiss came from the back of the hall—then another, until the place was sibilant, with an undertone of groaning derision. The storm broke about his head.

But this boy-man in the early twenties had the quality of all demagogues—the capacity to lose fear in opposition. Formidable, brutal, as he looked, there was something almost nervously helpless, something unconscious, about him, as though he were an automaton pulled by invisible strings.

Again the great voice, now not so raucous, boomed across the room—"Will you take an amendment?"

Bull had risen to his feet with a smile. A lift of his smooth, rather small hand, and the audience was stilled.

"My friends, let us not forget 'the milk of human kindness' of which Mr. Courcy has spoken." There was a twinkle in the eye—it might have been the twinkle of malevolence or of humour.

His voice changed dourly, as he looked at Destin. "What is your amendment?"

"It is an amendment against the resolution," blundered Destin, who, indeed, had no particular amendment in his mind—only the overmastering drive of irritation and opposition.

"What is it?" went on the chairman, implacably.

"It is an amendment against forming the new Federation."

"That is not an amendment but a fresh resolution," retorted the chairman with bland brutality. "It is a pity that some of our Socialist friends have the same vast ignorance of the rules of public meeting that they have of society."

"I am not a Socialist," said Destin simply.

"In that case," said the chairman suavely, "there can be no object in your moving an amendment to a resolution which has for its aim the destruction of Socialism."

"Sit down! Shut up! Chuck him out!" came from the benches around him.

Destin found his brain and his voice together. The opposition had done what nothing else could do—it had steeled him.

"Well, then, I wish to speak against the resolution, and as a citizen and one of the 'human beings' referred to by Mr. Courcy who happens not to agree with you, I claim the right of free speech at a public meeting. You do not, I suppose, Mr. Chairman, wish it to go out to the

world that at your initial meeting you forbade the right of free speech?"

It was a hit. Courcy was speaking to the chairman.

Again Bull had quieted the rising anger of the meeting.

"I will give you five minutes to speak, and you will kindly come up to the platform. Nobody shall say that the anti-Socialist Federation stifled free speech. Socialist or no Socialist, you are free of the platform, Mr. . . . ?"

"Destin."

"Mr. Destin—an un-English name, if the gentleman will let me say so. Perhaps he is a German?"

Bull's careful insolence completed Destin's coolness.

As in his impetuousness he tried to clamber up the front of the low platform, instead of taking the stairs at the side, his foot slipped, his knee striking the edge and jarring him.

It was an angry Destin that found himself facing an already hostile and disdainful audience. He looked a little ridiculous as he stood there, his trousers covered with the dust of his fall, his face pale, his stubborn, rather long hair and strongly-marked features in almost grotesque contrast to the people at whom he was looking. The meeting was still laughing at his fall.

"Now, Mr.—er—Destin," came from the chairman behind him.

From the corner of his eye he caught the six feet odd of Courcy, coiled into negligent and blank indifference, the arms folded, the head coming forward a little, the eyes peering blindly through the *pince-nez*.

"I am not a German and I am not a Socialist," began Destin. "I am the child of an English mother and an Irish father, and in politics I am what I suppose you would call a Democrat. The same as Mr. Bull," he said whimsically.

The audience were obviously bored by this personal

recital, and did not hesitate to show it, though in well-bred fashion. "Go on! Go on! Let's hear what you've got to say!" whilst from the back, in leaden humour, smacked a voice—"Cut the cackle and come to the 'osses!" punctuated by a crackle of laughter.

"The reason I oppose the resolution," went on Destin, "is because it is a resolution of blind negation. It ignores everything that cannot, must not, be ignored. It speaks of destruction—not construction, of destroying the new force in society, whether we like that force or not, without putting anything in its place."

The meeting listened in stolid silence. It faced him like a wall reared there blankly against him. He could feel it, as he often felt it afterwards, as an impenetrable mass, formidable with a dead life. It blanketed his soul, hobbled his tongue, stopped him as no active opposition could do.

For a moment his thoughts left him. He faltered. The meeting felt it, and sat there gloating in triumphant stolidity. His mind turned in a squirrel cage. Vainly he cast back to pick up the lost trail of his thoughts. What was it he had meant to say? What was the phrase he had to remember?

In fine carelessness, he had disdained notes. What was it?

"Get off! Get off!" called one or two voices from the back. "Come off if you've nothing to say." And then in strident derision—"Democrat!"

Behind him he felt Bull smiling at his discomfiture. At his side, Courcy's blank indifference. Brink's indignant fanaticism. The platform of little tradesmen, fussing and fuming at such shocking waste of time, as business men who knew that time was money—the impatience of reality with its arch-foe—idealism.

Again and again his brain cast back for the lost trail. The more he tried to visualise it, the more it eluded him.

What was the phrase? The loom of his mind was twirling inside his skull, spell-binding his thoughts in a woolly tangle. He could see it churning now in a tangle of red. "Red." "Red." What was it that was red? Then, as he passed into blank unconsciousness, the phrase came to him. "The Red Seed." He found himself speaking — speaking like an automaton, the phrases pouring out torrentially as though a familiar were speaking through the gullet of his throat.

The cries had died away. The men and women there were listening—contracted with hate, but listening.

"Mr. Courcy has spoken of the Red Seed. Well, I ask you who are the sowers? Who shall be the reapers? What is the Seed?

"If it be the seed of bloody, revengeful revolution —if it be the seed of envious impotence—if it be the blind seed of class hate—then it does not need anti-Socialist Federations to stamp it out—it will choke itself as it comes up—choke itself with the weeds of the evil thoughts sown with it.

"If it be the seed of death—then it will be barren with the sterility of death. If it be the seed of destruction—then it will destroy itself.

"But, supposing it be another kind of seed? Supposing it be the seed of new thoughts—of new desires—of new developments—the seed of a newer civilisation to rear itself out of the decay of our sick civilisation of to-day? Supposing it be the seed set in the cries of our starving millions — in our unsatisfied and brutalised working classes—seed set in the body of the harlot on our pavements—in the mind of the scientist in the laboratory—yes, even in the impotent idealism of our churches and chapels?

"Supposing it be the seed of the Eternal Impulse with its age-long drive?

"The earth to-day trembles with the event of the seed. It feels in its age-old womb the throbbings and the wrenchings which have ever heralded in the past the working of the blind fœtus of men's thoughts towards the light. Who can stop that miraculous birth—can strangle the spirit of youth?

"Can the Anti-Socialist Federation stop it? Can Mr. Courcy or Mr. Bull stop it? Can they force back into abortion the insistent, pulsating thing that is waiting to be born?

"Will they—will you—will I—be the midwives or the abortionists of the new society? Nay, can we be the abortionists even if we will?

"Can we view with calmness the terrific engine you and I and all of us have created in the earth—the engine of a competitive Juggernaut in which all that is best, all that is helpless, all that is other than brutal and rampant is crushed? Can we see unmoved the enslavement of the majority by the minority—the howling wilderness of hunger in our cities—the never-ceasing grind of those mills in which the minds and bodies of women, children, and youth are ground—ground as the mills of God grind?

"Can we see Europe an armed camp, a-bristle with bayonets—hear the earth shake to the tramp of Teuton and Latin—of American and Mongolian—see Europe a powder magazine into which at any moment a spark may be thrown to blow back into the time-abyss anything of civilisation we have been able to rear?

"The Red Seed! Supposing it is we who are sowing the Red Seed—the Seed which shall spring out of the sodden ground to drench it anew with blood? Supposing we are the Red Sowers?

"Supposing that other Seed which it is here our sworn purpose to blast in the ground be the Seed of a newer and better Society—of a Society where cooperation

rather than competition shall be the order of the day? Supposing it be the Seed of God Himself?"

Destin got no further. In a moment, the combustible materials which had piled themselves up before him under the silence of the meeting had exploded.

"Blasphemy! Blasphemy!"

The word ran round the hall, curling into a great wave of hate that met and smashed upwards in the centre.

He felt himself caught up in the whirlpool. Swung round, now off his feet, now touching ground for a moment. A swirling, maddened movement of which he was the nucleus.

There was a swaying—an unbearable pressure—an opening out—the cool air on his face—and he found himself on the city pavement, his coat hanging from him, the trickle of something warm on his cheek.

It was the beginning of the new challenge. The Magog meeting had shown that even in the sacred City itself the Red Seed had been sown, for black-coated men and unimportant women had risen in all parts of the hall when the cry of blasphemy had circled, to raise their voices with the man on the platform.

The new Democracy had thrown down the gauntlet to organised Society as Buster Bull had said, and organised Society had taken it up. It was but the prelude of the final victory over the Red Peril.

II

TAKING UP THE GAUNTLET

DESTIN found himself a Socialist the next morning. The *Daily Meteor*, which always knew everything, said so, and even the Liberal organs agreed. Destin had discovered it himself the day before on the pavement outside the Magog.

The "Magog" had hammered him out. Had welded the largeness of his "democracy" into the definiteness of Socialism. Had shocked him into a new and harder consciousness. And it was a shock.

For Destin had always revolted from the Socialist dogma: from what he conceived to be a soulless materialism—a movement without a religion—without a God if you wish. "The material conception of history" left his Celtic heart unmoved. Now, in spite of himself, he had been driven into the sinister, doubtful thing—had been forced to take sides in the struggle that was preparing. He was "a Socialist," but with reservations and under protest.

He soon found that in the society of the future there would be no reservations. He found it the next morning at Messrs. Peabody and Parsons, where he earned his living as Secretary-Manager.

In the interview which followed with his chiefs he made one or two curious discoveries, which left him astonished. These things were always astonishing him.

He discovered that "democracy" held many things besides the qualities usually associated with it. Here was little Mr. Parsons, an extreme Radical, who positively

gloried in his "democracy," which he spouted picturesquely through a cloud of moustache in season and out of season, with a shaking of the mane of black hair and punctuated by the twinkle of two eyes of brilliant black, now telling him with the same shake of mane, through the same moustache, that "really, Destin, though, as a Democrat, I believe in Free Speech and all that sort of thing, there *are* limits." And when Mr. Parsons said "limits," he snapped his strong white teeth behind the veil of moustache and flashed his eyes in much the same manner as a wire-haired terrier might do when dealing with cats, or rats, or other vermin.

What made it all the more incomprehensible was that this same Mr. Parsons had had frequent and rather acrimonious discussions with his partner, Mr. Peabody, who was a Tory of the old school as he was always pridefully declaring. They had raged in gentlemanly irritation and with due regard for the parliamentary amenities, interspersing their arguments with protesting —"my dear fellows," and "really, P., old boy, you *must* know," and so on over the topical question of Free Trade or Protection.

Parsons in these discussions had snapped himself into a fury of Free Trade individualism, whilst Mr. Peabody, bland and dignified in his Dundreary whiskers with pinched, aristocratic nose, set whitely upon a scorbutic countenance, though, it seemed, an Individualist, found his Individualism so strongly striped with Protection that it cut him off from that of his partner.

Now, it seemed, these two gentlemen had quite settled their differences, and, sitting entrenched behind the board room table, dealt unitedly with the common enemy—dealt firmly, but with tactful blandness on Mr. Peabody's part and with protesting though friendly argument upon that of Mr. Parsons, which mostly took the interrogative form.

Destin could not understand it. Fanatical though he himself was—impatient of contradiction in the faith that was in him—yet he had with it in the abstract a fine tolerance for discussion; for everything with him was a matter for discussion, to be talked over, churned into mental chile, and assimilated or rejected. He would have all men to be saved.

He would even have Peabody and Parsons to be saved, which he tried to make clear to those gracefully indignant gentlemen. And here were those argumentative individuals refusing even to discuss the matter with him, flinging away their chances of salvation with both tongues.

It seemed they both had been at the Magog meeting. They had both been witnesses of "the disgraceful exhibition" (to quote Mr. Peabody) of their Secretary. They both wanted explanations.

Denis Destin was quite prepared to give them "explanations." As many as they wanted—perhaps more than they wanted. But he found they did not want argument. Destin's form of explanation was always an argument.

He tried to put his views before the implacable pair, but found his ideas losing themselves in Mr. Peabody's whiskers and in Mr. Parson's moustache. What he resented more than anything else was the obvious sincerity of both men. If he could have felt that they were "crooked," it would have been easier to understand and to bear. But they were each as genuine and as fanatical as himself. Destin's fanaticism never blinded him on these points, though he didn't like fanaticism in other people.

Finding them impervious to reason, and discovering new hates for both these gentlemen, "he burned his boats," leaving his employers blandly uncomfortable though outwardly unmoved at his frank and fluent

expressions of opinion. They discovered a hitherto entirely unsuspected Destin—a fierce, rather coarse animal, with a voice that from the flageolet of civilisation had become a trumpet blast.

Destin on his part found that the walls of Jericho did not subside at the blast of any trumpet, which rather surprised him. Messrs. Peabody and Parsons had no use for explanations which were really arguments and finished with criticisms.

Not that Destin minded going. In fact he had intended to go, but in his own good time. As a triumphant demagogue, he would have liked to march away from Jericho with drums beating and a flutter of scarlet at the head. But the event had forced his hand.

Democracy was throwing down the gauntlet and Society was taking it up cheerfully.

For the first time in his life he was being brought nose round to reality. Hitherto he had lived in a dream-world—now that world was melting thinly away, leaving Society entrenched behind the towers and escarpments of fact.

It was an angry but triumphant Destin that walked out of Messrs. Peabody and Parsons' offices with a month's wages in his pocket. He felt he had scored. He did not know exactly how, but he felt it. He had finished with "the City." That he knew inevitably.

He summed up his resources. A few pounds in the Savings Bank. A cheque for twelve pounds ten shillings in his pocket. Board and lodging with his mother and father until he could see what could be done as a journalist.

For Destin had been "writing for the papers." A lean, secretive kind of writing. But, yet, a commencement. He could not help writing any more than talking. He was a writing, talking animal.

His mind cast back in comfort to the four-storeyed

house in the Beech Road, one of the roads running back to the river at Hammersmith, where the Destins, father, mother, and son, kept up appearances in the face of a hostile world with the aid of a little servant, five feet nothing, and an income of the irreducible minimum.

The Destins had all the Irish passion for a big house. In a neighbourhood where an older respectability struggled vainly against the fever of sub-letting, they had found the big house at the low price. No. 9 at least had resisted the tendency of time and place, though there had been a talk of "paying guests" soon after Mr. Destin, the retired Government official, had decided with his English wife that the merciful immensity of London was better than a little Irish town upon an income reduced to one half.

Destin felt that in the Beech Road he had a resting place for the soles of his feet—a taking off place for his flight into Fleet Street. His father and mother at least would help and understand his new situation.

But would they?

It came upon him like a cloud that perhaps they would not. An only child, they had loved him after their own fashion; his soft-hearted, grey-eyed father with all the affectionate impulse of the Irishman—his mother, with a harder, dourer, more chastened love. But had they understood him? Would they understand him now? Would they understand the Magog meeting?

It was with these thoughts that he turned his key in the Yale lock of "The Elms," and entered the room on the right, a sparely furnished sitting room.

He found his father, big-shouldered and hunched, his hands sunk in the crosspockets of his Donegal tweed, gazing the length of his nose—a longer, weaker edition of his son's—at the houses opposite. His iron-grey hair, parted stiffly, tufted here and there on the rather small, round head. His eyebrows overhung bushily the grey,

limpid eyes. The clean, humorous, rather weak-looking mouth hunched itself, like the shoulders, largely over the chin, a thought too finely moulded. He looked, as Destin sometimes thought, like a tombstone-monumental, with the long, slender limbs, small hips, and expanse of flat back.

In the woman who sat stiffly by the empty fireplace, one saw where Denis Destin got his strength of line. In the straight lips and tightened jaw, with the unquenchable eyes, black as the brows above them, lay the strength of the Destins. The mass of white hair brushed smoothly off the high, masculine forehead; the fineness of line of feature and skin; the blue veined tenseness of the hands that lay along the arms of her chair—all showed the fine, high strength of an unconquerable spirit.

The whiteness of hair and skin came in dead, arresting contrast to the eyes, full of fire.

On the table lay the *Meteor*, which, with the Bible, was the chief literature of "The Elms." From where he stood, he could see the sub-heading—"A Socialist Fracas."

Destin waited for his father to speak. It was an unaccustomed silence that met him. It was the Magog silence again.

He felt he must explain himself. A passion for self-justification rose within him. But he felt also that explanation was useless. He knew it when he entered the room.

He broke off in the middle. "Have you nothing to say to me?" he asked.

The great shoulders swung round. He hardly knew the eyes that contracted on him—those eyes that could be so tender. He had seen his father like that before, at a meeting of the Church Missionary Society. The eyes were those of Brink. Those of the little tradesman. He began to know them.

All at once his father erupted. Harsh, almost brutal in his indictment as he opened, his voice broke after one unusual, abrupt sentence. He put his hands to his face.

Then he went on. "We always said you would change. When you were a little boy at home long ago, we saw the taint in you. You asked questions about your church, your school—about everything. We thought it would pass. We forgot it. When you were twenty, you brought home that horrible Rationalist Press Association literature to challenge and frighten us anew. You queried everything. (You once said as a boy that you would query God Himself.) You even queried your own atheist literature. You doubted everything. You doubted everything the wisest minds of all time had known.

"But we did not expect this. We did not think that a son of ours could be a Socialist. A heralder of revolution. A degrader of morals. This is too much." He turned away.

Denis Destin turned to his mother, who sat stiffly upright.

"Will you hear me, mother?"

He started once more into torrential explanation and self-justification. As he spoke, his mother's mouth began to twitch in that dead, even palpitation like the beat of a heart—the twitch that had stayed after her paralysis of five years before.

The dauntless eyes filled with tears. Destin went over to her impulsively, and putting his arms around her neck, a rare thing with him, kissed her. He knelt at her feet, and felt the trembling hand that placed itself on his head, heard the gentle voice that thrilled, now with passion, now with exasperation, as it recited the hopes, the dreads, of the past. He felt his spirit moved as it passed from recitation into pleading—an appeal in which religion and love and convention and fear all blended.

His father waited by the window. The voice ceased. They were silent for his answer.

Denis Destin heard the call of blood. He had often ridiculed the idea of the blood-tie—had said sometimes in his bitterness that anybody or everybody understood something of him rather than his nearest. But underneath, he knew the blood-tie perhaps the strongest, subtlest, of all ties. Knew in this moment that the first things of life can never be entirely sloughed—that they cling and bind long after—nay, even that they wrap themselves more closely in the long afterwards.

His heart cried out to his mother. His mind ran the thread of memory. Found the loom of memory spinning around heart and brain. In the throb of his heart, he felt the engine that drove the loom. But even as it spun itself to suffocate him, he felt something else beat—something deeper, more insistent—something that *would* make itself heard.

It was with a fine impersonality, a detachment that was new to him, that he told them he could not turn back—that the Magog had put the handle in his hands and he had to plough his furrow to the end.

He found himself alone, looking out into the watery rays of an April sun. Society was taking up the gauntlet—not cheerfully, but in tears and tribulation—with searchings of heart and wrenchings of spirit. Its child was being born in travail.

III

THE CHILLINGTON HOUSE REUNION

As he stood there, a double-knock came on the street door.

The little servant came in, holding gingerly with the edge of her sack apron an enormous square envelope.

Destin stared at the bold, rather scrawling writing on the front. "Denis Destin, Esq." It looked formidable.

He turned it over and looked at the back. A coronet. This was something beyond his ken.

He opened it as though it contained a bomb. And it did.

He read upon a thick, plain card :

CHILLINGTON HOUSE,
PARK LANE, W.,
April 25, 19....

DEAR MR. DESTIN—

I have heard about the "Magog" meeting and shall be so glad if you can find time to come here to-morrow at 4 to meet a few Socialist friends.

Very sincerely yours,
ANNA CHILLINGTON.

"Chillington." Where had he heard that name? Then he remembered.

At this time he knew nothing of the Socialist movement, but like most of the other fifty millions of the British people, he had heard of the Duchess of Chillington—of the eccentric Duchess—or "the Democratic Duchess" as she was known. But how did she know

of him? He found out later that the Duchess of Chillington made it her business to know everything and everybody.

He had always felt vaguely that there must be something inspiring in a real live duchess becoming a Socialist. Especially a full-blooded human specimen like Her Grace of Chillington, whose portrait when she made her rare appearances at Court to present one of her numerous daughters, of whom she looked a splendid elder sister, appeared in all the sixpennies and even in that picture gallery of fame and fashion and crime, the halfpenny "Looking Glass," which never tired of "featuring" her.

One day she was shown driving her famous flying mare "Starlight" against the watch on the Carelands course. Another, riding some raking fence in the Quorn country and keeping up her reputation as the most daring horsewoman in England. Or it might be a picture of the Duchess nursing a sick child in a Whitechapel slum—and not made for the occasion either, for her heart was as big as her body.

Then Society would shiver in its strawberry leaves at the report that its erring sister had danced with an East-end docker at a Shoreditch Socialist reunion, or have its conscience seared by the story that she had snubbed a bishop.

And now he was to meet her in the flesh.

Denis Destin's democratic soul sometimes had lapses into snobbishness. It may have been his early training, or something innate, but he often found himself to his own indignant astonishment paying involuntary tribute to rank or fashion or wealth. He hated it. But there it was.

Perhaps that was why his heart beat so strongly on the Friday afternoon as he ascended the steps of Chillington House. He was not eased by the calf and plush

of the footman who opened the door. His hat and stick and gloves were however carefully removed from his person as he moved up the broad stairway of the home of the Chillingtons.

As the doors were thrown open, he heard his name called with shocking distinctness by the disdainful servant, to whom he had imparted it confidentially and with considerable diffidence—"Mr. Destin." He had never before really understood that he was a "Mr. Destin"—it quite staggered him.

Destin found himself enveloped in a roar of sound which poured on him from the four quarters of the spacious Louis Quinze drawing-room with one great voice that boomed itself out over the others. He could see nothing. Everything was revolving around him, until he was brought to his wits by a beautiful voice with a contralto glug-glug in the heart of it and found himself gazing on the original of the "Looking Glass" pictures.

In a moment he felt that he had known this woman from childhood. He could almost recall the stranded hair of dusky red carelessly knotted behind in the classical coil of Greece. He knew her. There could be no question of that. Everybody upon first meeting her thought they had known the Duchess somewhere in time or space.

There was a delicious though undemocratic odour of attar of roses—the only scent the Duchess used. It was faint and mingled with the democratic scent of perspiration—a sort of corduroy scent, which impregnated the place.

He heard the rich, deep voice congratulating him upon "the fine revolutionary speech you made at the Magog, Mr. Destin. Was delighted to find that our younger blood is being true to its destiny." Felt himself wafted away on the silken gown of the Duchess from person to person "This is Mr. Destin, the hero of the 'Magog.'"

Shook hands with men and women of all sorts and sizes, until he found himself stung to sudden coldness by a voice with something hissing in it—the voice he had heard at the Magog.

This, it seemed, was one of Her Grace's periodical "notions." The notion of making the hostile sections of the Socialist movement known to one another and even of bringing its natural foes into contact with the redcaps of revolution—"so as to understand one another a little better, Mr. Courcy."

For it was Courcy who stood slenderly before him, bowing with grave irony. "Now I will leave you two enemies to settle matters between you," said the Duchess, who disappeared, delighted with her success in bringing about one of her impossible situations.

At least Destin thought it impossible. That the one-time Conservative Prime Minister should condescend to speak to a rebel who had attacked Society at his own meeting seemed, to put it mildly, an impossible situation. Then Courcy began to speak.

In a sentence he had put the boy at his ease. It was the fatal facility which he had seen in the Duchess and which in the long afterwards he learnt to know and fear. "You know, Mr. Destin, though we may be political opponents" (here was the famous Courcy putting him on a level with himself) "still we can differ I hope as gentlemen. Indeed I listened with much interest to your Magog speech—a very happy effort under difficult conditions if I may say so—and I felt that there was a good deal lying underneath it. Nobody more than I regretted the violence used at the meeting." (Courcy was quite genuine in this as Destin saw at once.) "Arguments of that sort advance nothing. But you and I cannot expect all men to have the same philosophical detachment, which is so essential where questions affecting the stability of Society are concerned, and more particularly

now with the strike threats in the air. I wish *we* had more of the enthusiasm of youth on our side—more young men like yourself."

Courcy looked at him keenly—fleetingly. The blue eyes that peered blandly at him through the delicately balanced *pince-nez*, looked innocent. They might be. But Destin was conscious of a searching out—of an analysis—of a weighing in the balance of thought, which left him uncomfortable—"as though he had been vivisected," he said afterwards.

Destin felt the impulse to respond to so friendly an overture. To be grateful for so much understanding—for so much that convinced and flattered him—for the subtlest flattery in the world—that of the man of the world for the young man. In a moment he would have broken into one of his customary floods of eloquence, like the talker he was, in which he would have poured out his heart to the man before him, when he caught that look. It was only momentary. But it chilled him as though a finger of ice had sealed his lips.

That voice like the lowing of bulls was still sounding through the room. It never ceased.

It was coming nearer. Now it was close behind him, when it seemed to strike him between the shoulders. It was the hand of the speaker.

He found himself half turned round. "I am going to deprive you of the company of Mr. Destin, Courcy," boomed the voice.

Courcy had never been spoken to like that before. But everyone knew that, in his own words, John Belch, plain honest John Belch, talked to the swells "like God Almighty talks to a blackbeetle." Yet even Belch, with all the assurance that was already making him stand out, hesitated a little before the bland smile of the man he addressed.

Even whilst he wrung his hand, Destin felt that Belch

was thinking all the time of Courcy. "My boy, you must be a chip of the old block. I believe you are a bit of myself. It is just what I would have done had I been in your place. I'm glad you made Courcy and Brink and all that lot sit up."

He was speaking *at* Courcy, who however by now was loping his way through the crowd, his hands folded behind his back, peering from face to face, seeing nothing and everything.

"Now that we've got a party in Parliament, I'll show 'em what's what. We want more scenes—more beardings of the capitalist monster in the den where he has wallowed, warped and wiped out" (Belch was famous for his trilogies) "all that is best in human nature."

Destin was looking into a short, square face with short, square, pugnacious beard that curled itself around and up to the clear blue eyes which faced everything with assuredness. But it was the mouth with its gleaming rows of teeth, "and every one my own, my boy," as their owner said, which held him. It was a mouth which yawned four-square like a kit bag at a world waiting to be enveloped. The voice matched it. It came booming to the ear. It hazed the mind behind. It hazed the audience. The Voice was the man.

Destin was impressed. Impressed by the tremendous earnestness of the man; by his voice; by the honest cut of him from the square jowl to the square, short jacket. The demagogic instinct in him awakened responsively to that of Belch.

He was being hypnotised, when a little, petulant voice near him intruded itself.

"But, my *dear* Sir, the emotional appeal is useless—it is the intellectual appeal we need. Even the coming strike will be useless without the force of intellectual conviction behind it. Let us teach the proletariat what the materialist conception of history means."

"The materialist conception of history be damned!" eructated Belch, facing round to the frock-coated figure that jerked its arms convulsively like a jumping-jack.

The little eyes of the man glittered aqueously like a rain cloud when the sun is sitting behind it. Bowcher, for all his respectability, which enveloped him like a garment, his mannequinish legs and arms and tubby body, was not the man "to take it lying down," not even from John Belch. The lion head, with its overmastering forehead, cut off at the top into a plateau of materialism, fringed incongruously with its mutton-chop whiskers, all showed Bowcher the intellectual force he was in the movement; the man, as Destin knew later, who had refused a seat in the cabinet and sacrificed two fortunes for the sake of his Socialist principles, but who had an incurable weakness for the aristocracy. Bowcher, "the old Guard," as he was known, who saw a menace to the integrity of the movement in every critic with whom he did not agree. Bowcher—witchfinder and impossibilist.

"The materialist conception of history be damned!" repeated Belch in a voice that swept the room in a Jovian blast.

"Damn it by all means," interjected a young man in a chessboard suit, who had been passing from group to group in the room, injecting a word here and there, exasperating virility into imbecility. When he hovered on the fringe of a group, there were sudden silences, followed by little bursts of strained laughter.

No gathering of revolution was complete without Sydney Damascene, leader of the Platonists, an exclusive union of exotic Socialists, whose hair of shining black, parted whitely in the centre, pale fleshy face, and rainbow suits, spread themselves over the illustrateds and plastered the imagination of the-man-in-the-street.

"But my dear Sir, my dear Sir, what can your reading

of the history of the proletariat of the last half century have been?" expostulated Bowcher, still striving after politeness and addressing himself to Belch. "You *must* know the emotional appeal has never lasted. It is the head to which we to have appeal—not the heart."

"What's the matter with the eye?" said Damascene.

"I appeal to what I understand best," retorted Belch, who had no use for niceties of argument and ignoring Damascene, whom he obviously detested. "I appeal to a man's feelings. You can work on his head if you like. I will work on his heart. Economics are all very well in their place; that is, in the armchair. When you have to deal with human beings with red blood in them, you'll find your economics of precious little use. You can't demonstrate a man's feelings by the higher mathematics, even though you've written a text-book on the differential calculus or whatever you call it."

Belch stuck his hands into the pockets of his jacket in downright fashion, jutting his beard pugnaciously at his enemy.

This reference to Bowcher's more or less forgotten mathematical work, written soon after he had passed out brilliantly from Oxford, irritated its author beyond the resources of civilisation.

"I don't want an ex-dock labourer to teach me history at any rate," he replied tartly, the veins that interlaced his temples swelling.

Destin was astonished to see that the famous middle-class revolutionist had sloughed his revolutionary garment and relapsed into bourgeoiserie. Hitherto he had regarded Democracy as something ideally complete in theory and practice. Here was another side to it, so far unsuspected. He began to find that Democracy came in many guises.

"You blether about your materialist conception.

What does it mean anyhow?" bellowed Belch, his eyes full of angry lights.

"It means that a man is made by his physical environment—take yourself for instance," said Bowcher with an irony that was lost on the other.

"But doesn't man in his turn make his environment? tell me that," said Belch argumentatively.

"Which came first—the hen or the egg?" cackled Damascene behind Belch's shoulder.

Whilst democratic autocracy was fighting its battle in a babel of sound, in which Destin caught . . . "lack of comprehension" . . . "the heart of the people," and, regrettable to say . . . "damned University professor"; a saurian of a man, whose bent head and shoulders carried on long, corkscrew legs, towered over everybody else in the room, like a perambulating brain, approached the group, tap-tapping his way along the floor with his stick, leaning on the arm of a little nondescript woman, who led him much as a blind man is led by his dog.

"Pity the blind!" wailed Damascene under his breath as they drew near.

"Put it to Mathman," shouted Belch.

The loose, shambling figure came tapping across the polished floor, the head, furrowed into grey hollows like that of some antedeluvian animal, sunk massily between the hooped shoulders, one sunken eye showing itself, set back in the side of the slab of head.

"What is it? what is it?" said a high voice querulously.

"Bowcher here says the way to get at the people is to appeal to their heads. I believe in going for a man's heart. Bowcher says the heart appeal is all very well for women, but not for men. Which do you believe in Mathman?"

The little woman pulled over a chair, upon which the newcomer subsided in sections like a camel.

"I don't believe in emotions . . . that is, in women,"

said the great man, who had carved for himself a niche of his own amongst Europe's metaphysicians.

"The emotional appeal is perhaps the most direct, where Man is concerned. So far as woman is concerned," said Mathman, leaning his ponderous head upon the hands clasped over the handle of his stick, as though it were too heavy for him, "I have proved in my last book —'Woman as an Animal,' and proved conclusively, that as a human being, she has no existence—therefore for us she has no concern in this question.

"As I said, so far as Man, that is the Male, is concerned, the emotional appeal is perhaps the most direct, but for purposes of conviction is useless. Man is an Intellectual Animal in which alone amongst all animals, the functions of brain control those of Mere Feeling" (there was supreme contempt in his voice)— "therefore the intellectual appeal must of necessity be the only one where Man, the Human Being, is concerned."

All this the great man spoke in a querulous dogma, quite indifferent to the feelings of his wife, who listened with an impassive face, whilst the Duchess smiled behind her, beaming indulgently upon omniscience, delighted with the situation that was creating itself. She at least had no doubts about the position of woman.

"There you go, Mathman, off at a tangent as usual. Why can't you give a plain answer to a plain question?" snorted Belch. "Anyhow, confound it! aren't women human beings?" he added, ignoring the previous argument, his feelings getting the better of him and ever ready for what he called "a scrap."

"Woman is merely an animal, useful only for reproductive purposes," replied Mathman gravely. "I have proved that she is a creature controlled only by her emotions. That places her outside the pale of humanity, save as an accessory—a useful accessory if you will"—he added

magnanimously, "to Man—the Creator." When he used the words "Man" and "Male," he spoke in capitals, and was, as always, scientifically blasphemous.

The Duchess smiled, for she, like the rest, knew that the little woman who stood by his side with her small hand on the jutting angle of shoulder, ruled the great man in the tiniest acts of his life, without his knowing it—a tyranny from which he only escaped on those occasions, not infrequent, when she was laid temporarily *hors de combat* by additions to an already abnormal family, when he had his bag packed by her and went to his club for a few days, only returning after the event. They never quarrelled. These excursions from the feminist rule were perfectly understood between them.

"But, dash it all! Mathman, that is not good Socialism, and you are a member of the party," said the exasperated Belch, shaking a fist under the indifferent nose of the anti-feminist. "Socialism means the equality of the sexes. If it doesn't—what in thunder *does* it mean?" Belch by this time had quite forgotten the original argument.

"Anyhow you had a mother yourself," he added as an after-thought.

"The word 'mother' is much misused," said Mathman calmly, who appeared to object to motherhood on principle. "Motherhood is merely a natural function: there is no sentiment attaching to it. Woman is the reproducing animal—man the creative."

Destin, looking up from a battle in which his ideas of democracy were changing with kaleidescopic rapidity, saw a man standing on the outskirts of a triangular duel in which by now Bowcher was trying to bring the argument back to the original subject, Mathman, now mounted upon his favourite hobby, actually destroyed woman as an entity, and Belch, booming through the

riot, rode headlong, exasperated and puzzled, at both the others.

The man on the edge of the crowd was an ordinary enough London labourer, whose sallow cheeks and broken hands showed the unskilled man, with slack time and hard rations. He had been clean-shaved and washed, his celluloid collar clasping his neck poorly. His black moustache, streaked with grey, drooped disconsolately over the broken mouth. His hair, streaked like his moustache, was plastered into shining neatness on his shrunken, rhomboidal head.

Destin's eye was held by him—held by the hard contempt—the dumb fierceness of his look. It seemed that then and only then had he seen a working man for the first time. The puzzled eyes. The hands hanging awkwardly at the sides. The powerful hobbed boots. The snowy corduroys. But above all, the air of reality and horse-sense of the man.

The others seemed like playing children — their polemical subtlety faded out in that atmosphere of reality.

The most insignificant figure in the room, uneasy and fearful in his surroundings, he had a curious significance of his own—a general fundamental significance which pervaded the place.

Whilst he was looking at him and forgetting the battle about him, he felt a touch on his shoulder and found the Duchess behind him. His nostril caught a confusion of scents.

"I want to introduce you to Miss Vesta Craven, who is simply dying to know you."

She moved a little to one side, a hymeneal smile on her face, and discovered a young lady. The Duchess was an inveterate match-maker, who was always manufacturing alliances between the wonderful young men and women whom she called her "discoveries."

Indications that she was "simply dying to know him" were not very apparent, for Miss Craven was singularly collected. There was something cool and virginal about her, from the virginal coolness of the nape of her neck to the simple clinging gown of poppy grey.

Despite her reserve, she seemed to discharge an intimate and electrical atmosphere which permeated him with the "White Rose" which breathed from her as she moved. His eyes passed from the mass of light brown hair caught up carelessly behind the shapely, rather small head, to the eyes of clear blue which looked with such frankness into his, but above all to that virginal neck, so irritatingly cool, as it ran downwards into the mystery of the girl-body. He found something of the vestal virgin in her.

Destin found in the corner where the Duchess had piloted them, that Miss Craven could be quite human. He was always making little discoveries as she talked. It seemed she was a young woman of independent means who lived in a Hampstead flat, in her own words, as "a bachelor-girl." As their conversation passed from anarchy to vegetarianism and even "free-love," it was obvious that she had read widely.

She had broken out of what she called "an upper middle-class home" and "broken into" the Socialist movement, which as an enthusiastic convert with Syndicalist leanings she was studying, as she said herself, from the inside, "not from an armchair," and was looking to the coming strike to complete her education.

Destin found her finely unconventional, and was glad to accept her invitation to have a comradely chat and a cup of tea at the Hampstead flat.

The voice was still booming through the room like a discharge of heavy artillery, punctuated now by a shrill staccato of Maxim-fire.

"That Mr. Belch—I think he is delightful," said Miss Craven, for a moment, enthusiastic. . . . But there is that MacClusky woman—'The Stormy Petrel,' you know. How I hate her!" She shuddered slightly.

The staccato was that of "The MacClusky," as she was known in the movement—a full-fleshed woman with a Swami aspect, whose grizzled curls covered a solid-looking head like that of a benevolent ram.

"The children," she was saying piercingly. "The children—what are you going to do with them? Of course Professor Mathman doesn't believe I am a human being, having no feelings and no brain, being merely a reproductive animal, and therefore my question, like myself, has no existence." Her voice rose into unbelievable shrillness as she looked upon that magnificent male, who wilted slightly in his seat.

The original battle had resolved itself into one between Belch's bass and Mrs. MacClusky's treble, which shrilled itself above the diapason of sound with which the room hummed, checkered by the clatter of the tea cups. "What about the children? What about the Mothers?"

Mrs. MacClusky never forgot that she had managed to produce a boy, who had weighed two and a half pounds at birth and had never grown up. In the whole Socialist movement there was not a woman more fanatical and honest where the children were concerned, or more unscrupulous in getting her way about them. There was no trickery or cajolery to which she would not unselfishly descend for their sakes, whilst she had a Celtic exuberance which did not admit opposition.

Her hobby was education, in which she had made herself a holy terror to School Boards and to wardens of colleges, doctors, school teachers, heads of governmental departments and the various pastors and masters of young England, not even excepting the Oxford and Cambridge seigniors, over whose heads she held a

Damoclean threat of getting back their fat endowments for the poor scholars for whom they were originally intended, shocking them at her dishonesty. Her natural enemy was Bowcher, whose views upon woman she regarded as those of incipient blackguardism and brain-softening. She preferred, she said, in bland insult, "an honest fool like Mathman, who said what he meant."

Bowcher in the discussion had had his face bitten pretty severely by this terrible woman before he was taken off the field by his wife, who, it was reputed, had been originally a cook, and who led him by his cup of coffee.

"Oh! burst all metaphysics," said Belch in an uncontrollable fit of anger. "Let's get to business. Ask Graney here what he thinks about the way to appeal to the working-man. He ought to know." He pointed to the man in the white corduroys at whom Destin had been looking.

Graney flushed sullenly across his sallow face, looking more incongruous than ever in his surroundings. He mumbled something about "not knowing anything abaht it—spouting wasn't his business anyhow."

A man with a formidable spread of shoulder who had been steadily sucking at a briar, the heavy bowl of which nestled somewhere within his short grey beard, and who had been peering shaggily out from a welter of wire hair at Mathman and the rest during the altercation, took his pipe out of his mouth and said quietly to Graney with a strong Scottish accent—"Tell them what ye ken, Joe, from the men's side."

Graney looked into the cairngorm eyes of the speaker. It was as though a message had passed between them from which he took confidence. The other had put his pipe back and was puffing steadily away.

"Orl right, Jim. If you says it—it's orl right I suppose. What Jim McGraw says, goes," he added with a half apologetic smile, turning to the others. "Though mind you, Jim and I, though we belong to the same party, don't hexactly see heye to heye halways on tactics. Some of us want to get on a bit fawster."

"McGraw." So that was McGraw—*the* McGraw. Destin knew all about him—he was the best known of the Socialist chiefs to the-man-in-the-street, who was only just beginning to get some idea of the gods behind the labour machine. That was McGraw, super-demagogue, chairman of the Independent Socialist Party, forming the left wing of the National Workers Party, which now had its representatives at Westminster; the man who had pushed trucks as a boy in a Scottish coal mine—who, a self-educated man, had left a trail of rebellion wherever he went—in India, Egypt, South Africa. As Graney said—"What McGraw said—went."

"Well, you see it's like this 'ere. In a manner of speaking you gents are orl right and orl wrong. You don't know what you're a torkin' abaht . . . no, I don't mean that." He stuttered and stumbled, finding articulation as he went on.

"You come and live dahn Mile End wye and you'll see that it isn't to a man's 'art nor likewise to his 'ed you 'ave to appeal, but to his stummick. Mile End is one big stummick, saving her Ladyship's presence. All questions dahn our wye are stummick questions. There ain't no other. Gor' love yer innercence! Me and my mates 'ave listened many and many a time to you arm-chair gents—good comrades all—a givin' of it aht and tying yerselves into knots about us working men and the wye to do it.

"There's only one wye to appeal to the hanimile known as the working-man, and that's through his stummick.

When you've filled that, then you can go a step 'igher to his 'art, and when you've torked to wot you might call his bloomin' emotions, then you can come the intellectual over 'im. But the stummick's first. A man thinks through his stummick when you come to look at it.

"It ain't very elegant or clawssy maybe, but there's no good trying to fill an empty 'ed before you fill the empty stummick underneath it. It's a sort of boiler you know. You stoke the stummick and get steam up to help the brain turn rahnd.

"And then some of you gents, with your eddication, and meaning well I know, imagine that Bill Smith, working-man, muck shifter and beer walloper, is worrying his napper abaht wot you calls problems. I don't suppose as 'ow I'm any worse than the next—but it took me ten years to know what I wanted and to join my first Socialist branch. Ten years gents. When you've got a donah wot 'as sold you up thirteen times in ten years, putting it all dahn 'er froat into 'er stummick—I told you it was all a stummick problem dahn our wye—leavin' 'er old man to do his day's work *when* he can get it, and wash and dress the kids before he goes aht on the prowl, it isn't 'eds and 'arts that will be troubling him, but filling his stummick and the stummicks of the kids.

"And that's me. I've 'ad to pull a hole in my belt donkey's years to get the threehalfpence a week for my Independent Socialist branch—and there are others like me.

"You know it's easy to keep going in the limelight. Give a man a bellyful of handclapping, a big meeting, and the band playing "The Red Flag," and it's easy to be a Socialist—but dahn in Mile End it's not all beer and skittles you can take mine, potterin' arahnd from dye to dye expecting every moment to be your next."

The man had broken off once or twice as though unused to so much talking, but something that drove him from the inside, which might have been eagerness to make the thing plain, and might have been exasperation, sent him on again. Now he had stopped once more for a moment, but as though something else had occurred to him which had to be said, he began again:

"Look 'ere—do you fink the thahsands in my union would be coming aht on the cold streets in a week or so for a question of 'art or brain? Do ye fink the millions in the railway unions and the others would be a-taking of their lives in their 'ands for a question of hettiquette—or the miners? No fear. They want more for their stummicks. They want better conditions for their wives and kiddies. And yet, and yet . . ." he broke off in wistful doubt, "there's sentiment in it too—sentiment underneath it all.

"If our men come aht and the strike tikes plice, every branch leader—every local Secretary—will have sentiment pulling at 'im as well as stummick—and maybe a bit of ambition too. But for the rank and file, it will be a stummick question, with a dash of sentiment. All sentiment comes from the stummick. Some day the working-man will let 'is 'art rule his stummick and some day perhaps 'is 'ed 'is 'art—then let the employers look aht. But it all starts from the stummick.

"Gor' lumme! when I 'ear you gents a torkin' I fink I'll go off my rocker—but you mean it well—you mean it well. Any'ow, I mean it well, too, but don't forget gents, all the labour question is a stummick question in the first plice—and arter that the 'art and 'ed if you like. Ask Jim McGraw there—he can say better than me but 'e'll tell you the sime."

The man stood there defiant, but abashed at his own eloquence. His jaws rasped as though they wanted

oiling—were not used to doing much more than working over food or a plug.

Destin's heart went out to the man, who however, staggered him a little too. He had always thought of the soul when speaking of Democracy. Now he found it also had a stomach. It was a cold douche.

Even Belch was quiet when Graney had finished. Mathman crouched over his stick, sunk in the fogs of intellect, pondering over the God knows what intellectual problems Graney had raised in the hypertrophy of his mind. Some yards away, Bowcher was complaining to two or three friends about "that man Belch."

"The Strike." The words had come again and again to Destin as he moved about the room, leaving an impression of something imminent and overwhelming. "The Strike."

Of course he had seen in the papers and skimmed over retiring paragraphs about trouble brewing amongst the Transport Workers. The papers were always full of that kind of talk. But everyone knew that strikes were as common as beer bottles and broken as easily. To the-man-in-the-street the word signified nothing beyond "labour agitators," "enemies of society," and, occasionally, higher prices for coal or food. Sectional strikes were the ordinary phenomena of everyday life—a nuisance, transient, something that led to nothing. Of no moment to the middle-class man anyhow.

But this time Destin caught something from Graney and McGraw as they spoke together. The Scotsman talked of "two and a half millions of men involved." "Paralyse the transport of the country . . ." "the meeting in the Square . . ." "the use of troops . . ." "this is the end of sectionalism . . ." and other things came more or less significantly to his ears. The Strike was in the air.

As Her Grace's guests passed down the broad stairway, he heard in rumbling basses, punctuated by shriller treble—"The Strike." Down into the broad sunlight of the street and there on a poster of the *Evening Owl* flamed:

McGRAW'S
LAST
WORD.

IV

TRAFALGAR SQUARE

FROM where he stood on the plinth of the Nelson Monument, facing the National Gallery, Destin's eye drank itself full of colour—his ear of sound.

The blare of brass sprayed itself against the walls of the Northumberland Avenue hotels, clumped by the detonations of the big drums which beat themselves frantically through the ruck of the banners. Blotches of crimson scattered themselves to the airs of the June afternoon. Masses of blue and green, ornate with gold, burst against the eye above the sweating, heaving mass of men and women that shuffled along under them. A mælström of humanity surged around three sides of the platform, the bronze lions of another age crouching grimly as they watched the new eruption.

This surging, panting mob that struggled to find its place, nebulous as it was, yet had its individualities and its currents. The brilliant blue and gold banner of the Electricians, with the lightning playing upon the silken sheet, headed a small, compact body of men, whose tense faces and air of power showed the concentrated alertness of the players with death. Behind, flaunted the blood-red banners of the Anarchist-Communists of the East End, headed by a black banner with the death's head and crossbones in white which jerked itself drunkenly out of a nondescript welter of pale-faced Slavs and Latins. Here, where Pole and Russian Jew fraternised with the Montmartre worker, the European continent seemed to have poured itself out from its back-

blocks. There in front, holding a pasteboard skeleton, with the words "I am King Capital" raised above it, strode a fury of the new revolution, her great horse-tail of hair knotted loosely behind her, her blouse open at the bosom. Behind her, hobbled or pushed or danced, as fancy and the crowd permitted, half a hundred Jewesses—tailoresses—those workers in the city of dreadful night with their sixteen-hour day and the "team" system marked on their eaten faces and anatomised bosoms. Even the graves of the city were giving up their dead to the Square on this afternoon of June.

Here, coming in from the Strand to the "Tykes o' the Barn" north-country band, walking soberly, shouldering their way easily through the undersized men about them, as a tramp-steamer shoulders her way through Channel waters, came a mass of clean-shaven giants, crooked and twisted as became delvers in earth, their backs hunched from the coal seam—their faces washed pink, save for the furrows where the underground had struck itself. Hefty Novocastrian and Lancashire lad marched side by side with the Yorkshire Tyke. These, the children of the underworld, with the awe of the darkness upon them and a great faith in their eyes.

A fury of drum-beating, and up Northumberland Avenue from the Embankment poured butcher, baker, and candlestick-maker. Lean, shrewd tailor; matchbox maker; and the flotsam and jetsam of the sweated, clattered along, their tail intermingled with the crest of a horde of London dockers, that broke itself into them as a following wave breaks into the backwash of another.

These last caught the eye of Destin. Desperation lurked there—a hollowed-cheek look which showed the unskilled worker with the long night shift, the odd-job look of the hunger-line man outside the London docks in the keenness of the early morning—the men who daily bedded with starvation. There was no mistaking them.

At the head of them as they swept around the base of the plinth, staggering under the motto "United we Stand," he saw Graney, his face shrunk on the task of keeping his banner aloft amongst its peers. He saw his hips contracted under the weight and noticed, despite all his starved look, the sinewy shoulders that crouched themselves effectively to their work as a man who is used to swinging sacks of corn and coal from hold to shore—to relieve the laden bellies of the argosies of the ocean.

As the banners revolved before him in the lens of a gigantic prism; as band succeeded band and the shrill of fife cut across the undercurrent of brass—the eye and ear tired. The space around the plinth was now packed to the low walls, the banners ranging themselves in a mosaic of crimson and gold against the wall under the railings before the National Gallery. At the back of the last Union had poured a rag, tag and bobtail of human refuse scoured from the streets of the East End and from the Embankment by the brush of the marchers, who poured in a disorderly mass that filled the square space, overflowing on to the stone railings and the steps of the Gallery itself. It was chaos incarnate.

And then as his eye ran, tremulous with that strange enthusiasm for massed humanity which makes the demagogue what he is—as his heart contracted to the "Marseillaise" and "The Red Flag" and the tears welled to his eyes in unreasoning pity and love for these men and women with their poor clothes and poorer discipline, but in whom he felt the overmastering of destiny—he passed to those clean, well-groomed, well-caparisoned men in blue cloth who had ridden at the head of each block of the procession, had marshalled them along the sides, had cajoled and pushed and held them along the courses of the streets like channels that are the guides for sewer water.

From his place he saw the tops of the helmeted giants,

who, in deadly even positions, had bulwarked the base of the column. He saw, a few hand spans out, a line that divided the crowd into its regulated parts, and then another and yet another, as lines of rocks in a breaking sea. He saw behind the stone rails the horsemen, statoned, booted and spurred, waiting for their work, and knew from Belch who stood next to him, that every alleyway about held its bellyful of bluecoated men ready at the moment to be vomited over and into the mass about him.

Hearing Belch's voice, his eye had run to those on the plinth.

Standing easily near him, his checked suit tightly buttoned down the front, was Damascene, his monocle stuck inexorably in an eye which gleamed like a lighthouse as he focussed the crowd in humorous disdain. On his head, a broad Italian hat of black velvet, straight-brimmed and sunken crowned, whilst thrown gracefully back from his podgy shoulders sprang a cloak of some black silken material, lined in crimson, that came to the hollow of his knee, splashing the plinth. The platform was a furnace blast, but he wore his cloak as though it were a November day.

"They smell damn dirty," he said to anybody who cared to listen, and threw up his well-cut nose as he sniffed the tainted airs. "Phew! it's devilish hard work being a democrat."

Bowcher was there, looking, as Damascene said, "like a trout in a lime basket," his little bourgeois figure, top-hatted, the most incongruous thing in the square on that Sunday afternoon. The Duchess was there in a hat from Paris, which set off the dusky red of her hair to a miracle, very much the *grande dame* despite her democracy, but quite at her ease and smiling in friendly response to the cries, which, were they not so friendly, might have been ironical, that greeted her from the larynx of the mob.

McGraw, behind the others, looked shaggily at a note-book, ignoring the shouts of "Good old Jim!" "McGraw for ever!" that came up to him. There was a sprinkling of hard-headed hard-handed Union leaders, workman-like, and heavy with responsibility.

It was to these last that Destin felt himself drawn. He was looking at them and thinking how ridiculous and amateurish the middle-class revolutionists looked by the side of them, when a gentle voice greeted him.

"Mr. Destin. I *thought* it was." And he found himself looking into the face of Miss Craven, who in some way of her own had managed to climb the plinth and edge her way through the crowd without showing a crease in her white muslin costume. She looked more virginal than ever. With a splash of red ribbon over the heart, she reminded him of the virgin martyrs.

Her smooth, musical speech rippled itself indifferent to the scene about them, but he forgot her quickly as his eye ran backwards and forwards from Disorder to Order —from the inchoate heaving mob-mass to those blue lines that dotted themselves in inexorable geometry across the ruck. From the sweaty, grimed faces and shrunken bodies to the well-cared, well-set-up men who, with its crushing deadweight, had developed out of the collective soul the thing known as discipline—Discipline, the blinded giant.

As he looked, he wondered why the authorities let them demonstrate. He wondered, knowing that behind these blue coats was the red of the forces of the higher discipline, why rebellion was allowed to foment itself on that Sabbath afternoon. The contrast was terrific.

On the one hand, age-worn, well-ordered society, moving smoothly in the grooves of tradition, with its customs, privileges, and bulwarks—on the other, the heaving, squattering mass of democracy, stretching itself

n its belly like an animal rising from the gutter—rising from nothing . . . to what?

A voice was reaching out in even insistent tones from he plinth—a voice with a timbre that percolated through he blank wall of bodies and made it heard above the niasma of sound that rose like a cloud of flies over the warming crowd.

"The spark that fired the train . . . we are meeting ere to protest against the dismissal of Joe Lanthorne whilst off duty . . . railway tyranny . . . other engine-drivers came out . . . men of all grades . . . blackleg abour . . . dockers refuse to handle blackleg goods . . . miners have shown splendid solidarity . . . refuse o mine steam coal . . . will raise the question of rates or 'difficult places. . . .'"

The sentences came disjointedly to Destin who found is attention rivetted by the wiry, fine fibered figure, diminutive and concentrated—by the face, ivory-pallid—he short, strong nose—the dark eyebrows meeting in a double arch over the dark, deep-set eyes—the compact head with its smooth, well-brushed black hair—the boni-ess of cheekbone and jaw—and a terrible mouth that met like the jaws of a trap.

He had reason to look at Jacob Steltham. Steltham was "the man with the policy"—something that he pursued, as he pursued everything—with resistless, tire-ss assiduity. This dour Novocastrian who had drifted nto the labour movement nobody knew exactly how—bout whose head were already gathering the fires of action; acclaimed by the older rebels as a traitor—by he nebulous mass of Radical-Trades Unionists, only weaned the day before yesterday from their Liberal nother, as "a sane man," "an intellectual force," as "the oming man," but above all as the Strong Man of the novement. Through praise and blame, Steltham held venly on his way, shearing through everything with

that nose and jaw under the drive of ambition he had got from his Scottish mother. A formidable little man, Destin thought. But he was speaking. . . .

"Now, above all times, we want strong men at the helm of the Unions. With the new Triple Alliance of the Railwaymen, Miners, and Dockers, my friends, we are playing with a powerful machine—but a machine of extreme delicacy, which needs the nicest handling." He paused as though to feel out what lay behind the silence down there, licking his lips the while.

Destin felt that silence. It was not the impassive silence of the Magog meeting, but a vibrant, expectant silence, as of an animal about to spring. He at least could not read it.

Apparently satisfied, the speaker went on with a suggestion of superiority in his voice. . . . "Those of us who are in a position to judge have reached the conclusion that we must exhaust every method of negociation with the Government, my friends, before we fall back on the double-edged sword of the strike. . . ."

"Humbug!"

The single word cut like the swing of a sword across the silence of the meeting. It did not come from the crowd, but from the plinth itself.

Destin saw for the first time in his life a face that stamped itself for ever on the retina of his mind. Never again did he forget those steely eyes, fierce and fanatic, that burned in cold fire on the speaker.

The great slant of man half sat, half leant, against one of the corner lions—a pillar of fire and whipcord.

"Humbug!"

In a moment the crowd had found voice. It came huskily at first, in a hoarse rumble like the grind of water on a shallow beach, then lifted, until ten thousand throats were screaming incoherently in one vast larynx. A faint murmur of protest was cut down and trampled

out. The cries came from the dockers and the unskilled sections, the Miners, for the most part, holding themselves silent, whilst the battalions of the railwaymen stood stolidly like soldiers under discipline.

The chairman knitted his brows slightly, smiled a queer little smile, and finished quickly.

"Creegan means business," said Belch in a hoarse whisper to the man next him. "He's going . . . " but the rest of his words were lost in a whirlwind of cheering that whipped upwards in screaming spirals to frighten the pigeons on St. Martin's Church.

Destin could not understand it. Standing in the clear space on the sloping plinth was a boy—he might have been seventeen, or he might have been twenty-five. The sun shone upon a pale, rather freckled face, the chief features in which were a snub cherubic nose and a big, good-humoured, rather loose mouth which expanded in an appreciative grin as the cheers met him.

"Give it 'em Wildish! Good old Hector! Bravo boy!" The cries rose here and there from the crowd, and it was noticeable that all sections joined in. Even the stolid railwaymen were shouting.

"Gag the Boy, for God's sake!" said Damascene in a whisper of tragedy. "He never opens his mouth but he puts his foot in it—and there's plenty of room for it too!"

The tweeded figure was jerking itself about on the platform, exchanging friendly badinage with this man, telling a story, calling out to some interrupter by his Christian name, throwing a word over his shoulder to those behind him on the plinth; and all this in a megaphone of a voice which rivalled Belch's own.

There was a boyish grin on his face as he trounced with all the splendid irresponsibility of youth the Government, from the Prime Minister downwards. The reporters on the plinth were busy scribbling, for young

Hector Wildish, the *enfant terrible* of the movement, was known in Fleet Street as "good copy," from the time when twelve months before he had set Britain agog by defeating a Cabinet Minister in his own pet constituency as Labour candidate, winning the seat. He was known to his fellow M.P.'s in the National Workers' Party as "the young man in a hurry."

Every hit was punctuated by a roar of approval. Laughter, jeers, howls, swept across the face of the audience which was now galvanised into life. He was for hard-hitting and no quarter. Time enough to talk about negociations when the other fellows came to their senses. Sober men wedded to political action found themselves against their will cheering the florid periods of the speaker, who had the resistlessness of youth itself. His fair brown hair. His square freckled face. His slender boyish figure. Everyone loved Hector Wildish. Even Steltham could not help smiling a little behind the mask of his face every now and then at some pungent sally.

He finished as he had begun, in a storm of applause, whilst the crowd struck up—"For he's a jolly good fellow!" singing it like a dirge.

"Look at Steltham's face," said Damascene. "He's like a cobra with the fangs out."

The square was sonorous. The cheers had died away into jeers which rose and enveloped the thin stereotyped applause that greeted the heavy jowled, be-whiskered man who stood there blinking owlishly in the sunshine, his hands sunk deep in his crosspockets.

There was a vast self-satisfaction about Tom Manby. He was satisfied with the crowd, with himself, with the Government. The hoots, which Destin noticed came only from a small section of the crowd, affected him no more than the one-eyed Nelson which stood high above him. He took them, Destin heard him say to Steltham, "as the crackling of thorns under a pot."

Steltham eyed him unpleasantly. There was an air of Sabbath calm about him which was exasperating—the air of the conventicle clung to him.

He talked on in a broad voice, steady and even. "My friends, I was a-thinking as I came here this Sabbath afternoon, that on this day of rest we should think of the counsels of peace. As a Liberal of thirty years standing—same as me feyther afore me—I believe t'Liberal Government stands for righteousness if we will but give 'em time." ("Give 'em ten years in chokey!" came a bass from the crowd, with a ripple of laughter. "That's wot they want.")

"The gentleman 'oo 'as just spoken seems to know all about it," said Manby, who had a certain stolid humour of his own.

"As I was a sayin', give 'em time. As a Yorkshire miner, 'oo 'as worked his way oop from t'pit, I know, same as my fellow miners, that we have got much from Liberal Governments." ("What's the matter with Independent Labour Representation? Why aren't you man enough to resign your seat? Go back to your friends the Liberals!" said a little man immediately under him.)

"That's all right, my lad. Let us be peaceful in our strength. What does t'owd Book say?" ("Never mind the old Book, let's have the revised version!" came the ironic bass again.)

"T'owd Book is t'owd Book," said Manby, in the manner of a man stating an unanswerable proposition, and showing a tendency to wander from the subject. "It isn't because we sit outside the Government ranks that we're allus to be finding fault. . . ."

The rest of Manby's speech was inaudible, the jeering being incessant and suffocating. But through it all, he held his way, his mouth opening and closing like an automaton. Damascene was viewing him delightedly as though he were a prehistoric animal.

Speaker succeeded speaker, but what Destin noticed was a steadily rising stream of criticism directed at the Parliamentary Party, dammed back only here and there by a pro-Parliamentarian, who was almost invariably one of the older men. The great mass of the people, however, stood there stolidly enough, not actively resenting the critics, but occasionally raising a low growl of protest and an appeal for fair play.

To add to the confusion, there were cheers and counter-cheers coming from the other sides of the plinth, and in an excursion round the column he noticed that the blocks of speakers collected there were of the younger Wildish type. Even in Trafalgar Square Democracy showed a tendency to divide itself into camps. It hurt him vaguely, taking the sunlight from the square and fading the colours on the banners.

It was after one of these excursions that Destin got his chance. Steltham and Damascene were talking closely, Steltham looking from his watch to the clock on St. Martin's Church and back. "But whom can I put on?" he heard him say to the other. "Jones hasn't turned up, and there are only Quest and Creegan—and we don't want the Syndicalist to have the platform for the rest of the afternoon. His men have had a pretty good innings on the other two platforms. As it is, he said he would speak last or nowhere. I was counting on you to keep them amused for twenty minutes at least. Are you certain you can't raise a canter?"

"I'm as dry as Manby's theology," Damascene said. "My voice is like that of conscience—still and small. And you don't know the sort of direct action devil you might raise if you put me on. None of you will take my Syndicalism any more seriously than my Platonics. I'm worse than Creegan if you and he would only believe it." He searched the plinth until his eye met Destin.

"There's your man," he said. "He can talk like the

archangel Gabriel in the 'D.T.'s.' He's safe enough, if that's what you want—doesn't know a political from a direct actionist, or the devil from either. He's the man that raised hell at the 'Magog,' and he's been spouting a lot since. Besides there's nobody else—there's not a good political left on either of the other two platforms. Ask him."

"But he's not on the list of speakers," protested Steltham.

"Oh! that doesn't matter—you can say he took my place to represent the Platonists. I'll enrol him after the meeting." He waved his hand airily.

Destin felt the blood rush to his head. He tried to look indifferent as Steltham came to him.

"Could you go on after the present speaker—say for ten minutes or so?"

Destin heard himself say—"Yes, he thought he could."

He looked around him for inspiration, and as his eye ran to the upturned faces, like the faces of devotees at a sacrifice, he felt afraid. What could he say? It was the Magog over again—but worse. He had a wild idea of borrowing a pencil and jotting down a few notes. But he knew that was too late, and he couldn't speak from notes anyhow. This was his chance to make good!

Supposing he blundered. After all, he knew there were a dozen shoals which might wreck him in the complexity of the movement. Manby's speech had shown him that, apart from the little he had learnt himself in a few weeks. What could he say? It seemed that the speakers who had gone before had covered the ground.

He watched the shadows creep downwards on the face of St. Martin's Church, like giant fingers. "The writing on the wall." It rushed to him. This was the writing on the wall—like the writing in the book of Daniel

which Nebuchadnezzar saw. This was the sign of the times. "The writing on the wall."

His brain began to work. Tumultuously it ran until the dynamos of his mind were stored. "The writing on the wall."

But how should he finish? In his speeches of the previous months, he had learned the value of a peroration. What should his peroration be?

In the effort to work this out, he saw that the man before him had stopped to a splutter of applause. He saw Steltham walk to the front, and a pressure lay on his heart. He could hear the voice—"Mr. Destin, the man who threw down the gauntlet at the Magog meeting."

The voice was coming remotely. He moved forward a step or two on the sloping plinth and feared that he would slip down on to the spiked helmets of the policemen below. He stood there for a moment in silence. Not a cry came to him. His thoughts had taken wing. He was spellbound.

He hung there swaying slightly, when a voice came from underneath—a Cockney voice—"Good old Destin!" It was Graney.

There was a spatter of cries, then it gathered into a flying spume, and then came the surge, a crash, and the silence had fallen again.

He was still standing there trying to think. His heart was beating to choke him. There was something surging—boiling within him.

"Friends and Comrades . . ." he hung in the eye of the crowd for a moment. "Friends and Comrades . . ." the words were coming from someone's else's lips. A sentence . . . then a stop . . . another . . . he was trying to think—of what was it he was trying to think? This was his chance—this was his chance.

And then, as at the Magog, it came from him. First

a bubble or two—then a splutter—then a full-throated emission.

"The writing on the wall." His voice was gathering weight and volume. It was rising. He forgot to think, and thought came unbidden—tumultuous, pregnant, fruitful thought.

"The writing on the wall." This meeting like that other at the Magog was the writing on the wall. The moving finger of God Almighty. The Hand that showed the way to the new Democracy. The uprising of the proletariat—the doom of capitalism. The resurrection of the dead. The men, the women and the children, murdered and crippled on the battlefields of labour in the past were pouring from their graves whilst the Hand wrote above them. In the Hand they saw the sign of the times to come—of the resistless march of those who had been dead—who were staggering from the graves of capitalism to the brighter light of the kingdom of Socialism above them.

He could not remember afterwards what he said. He was only conscious that from the mass before him there came the answering rumble of interjection. It was like the prayer meetings in the old Methodist church in Ireland. It was the awakening of the spirit—a revival.

And when he finished, the rumble had risen to a great volume of sound which ran from the base of the plinth outwards to the furthest edge of the sea of faces. It gathered again on the outside and swept inwards to him—and he felt stealing through him the message of mind to mind—these men and women below him who poured into him the message of hope and love and prophecy he had given out—gave it back ten thousand fold, and when he had stepped to his place behind, he knew, despite all his altruism—all his love for those people below—that he, Denis Destin, had made good. He put the thought from him as unworthy, but still it

came back at him again and again. The thunder of the cheers was the chant of his success. He was a leader of Democracy.

Bringing his mind back, Destin heard the strong even tones of a short, massive-looking man, who, had he not spoken good English, might have been a German.

He was pouring a stream of derision upon Manby and what he called his "Lib-Labism." In particular, he sneered at his teetotal chapelism, saying that "the workers had had enough of the pulpit in the past," something that the miners and the railwaymen received silently. "When the Workers' Party took over the miners it hardly bargained to take over the relics of Liberalism and its economics too," he went on.

All this left Destin puzzled. Why should the Workers' Party be attacked at what was a joint demonstration of all Socialist and Labour bodies? He thought that Labour was a solid whole. But the audience seemed to understand it, and already recriminations were being exchanged in the heart of the crowd, whilst the police grinned stolidly.

Now, as though something fermented in him, he was urging the workers to become something he called "class-conscious," and to join the Social Democratic Union, which it seemed was the original and only genuine class-conscious party. He spoke much of the "class war," and every now and then plunged into a churn of economics, which Destin could see left the crowd puzzled and a little irritated.

This man, Quest, Destin found afterwards, had been a porter in a London jute warehouse, and had taught himself German and French in his spare time. He was one of the pioneers of English Socialism and was a fervent Marxian, seeing in Karl Marx the new gospel which, through the intellectual process, should save the workers of the world. With his brown, doggy eyes and

heavy, drooping moustache, Destin thought of him as a faithful mastiff, but a mastiff that had learned its first lessons so well that it found itself unable to learn others. A brilliant intellectual, the one-time porter had so grown away from his fellows of an earlier day that he failed to understand them, and they him, though they loved him too in a curious puzzled fashion as Destin saw.

Steltham's face had been growing heavier as he glanced from face to face on the platform searching for something. His own men had failed badly. But Quest's speech, which had begun so well and had ended in such an intellectual fog, appeared to reassure him. However, as his eye caught Creegan, who was to be the last speaker, his brow fell again. The minute hand of the clock on the church was climbing up towards the XII, whilst the hour hand almost rested on the V, the time of grace allowed by the police for the meeting.

He stepped forward and touched another speaker on the shoulder, one of the miners' leaders, and motioned him to the centre of the plinth. In a moment, "Creegan! Creegan!" was being cried from the people. It grew as the man stepped forward, vainly trying to make himself heard. Steltham looked about him, then at the crowd, and then at the man. He stepped to his side and said something in his ear. The man threw up his hand in a gesture of acquiescence and went back.

Creegan was moving nervously from foot to foot. His eyes ranged the crowd ceaselessly. The strong, straight nose, pointed now here, now there, as though feeling for something. The steel-grey hair was partly straightly and starkly over the hard, clean freshness of his face. But the face, though that of a young man, was heavily furrowed, whilst a scar ran lividly from ear to cheek-bone.

As his name was called by the chairman, who, Destin

thought, waved to him peremptorily, the tall figure lurched forward to the centre of the sloping stone. He stood there for a moment, one hand straddling his hip, his feet close together, his frame drawn tautly up. The nervousness of the instant before had gone. The man was to Destin a finely tempered piece of steel—grey-blue and keen—a sort of lightning conductor.

For all his furrows, Brian Creegan looked more of the boy even than Wildish. But he might as easily have been thirty or forty.

There was an air of intensity—something brooding and eroding about him. Destin thought he looked the most formidable object on the plinth, where every eye was watching him, Damascene alone keeping his habitual grin.

The confusion of sound that had followed the last speaker, dropped at once as he stood there starkly, brooding like a Titan over the crowd.

Then he spoke. Destin was disappointed, for the voice was harsh. It grated to the mind.

"What are we here for?" he opened uncompromisingly. "Are we here to discuss the merits of the Workers' Party, or are we here to do something? Which is it?" He folded his arms as he looked hardly, almost disdainfully, at the crowd beneath, which now had strained itself into a hard attention.

"Put it to yourselves as human beings. Never mind the labour leaders. Don't mind me, Brian Creegan. Use your own brains, if you've got any.

"Listen." The roll of the brogue came into the voice as it went on. "When I was a little *gossoon* running about the streets of Dublin, I hadn't a shoe to me foot. I often wanted a meal. Many's the time I saw me mother cryin' for the want of a bit to put in our mouths. That was more years ago than I care to think. Last week I went to Dublin. In the streets of the city I saw other

little Brian Creegans, running about barefoot and hungry. What has changed?

"Listen again. Is there a city in the kingdom which hasn't its thousands out of work? Is there a pavement without a poor lost girl? Is there a city in Christendom where the voiceless cry of the starving doesn't go up day and night to the throne of God asking blindly—'why is it?'"

His voice took a fuller, deeper tone.

"One hundred years ago ye formed your Unions. You've been working and agitating and organising ever since. You've spent millions of pounds, each pound drawn from the sighs of the worker—sweated blood-money. You've voted backwards and forwards until you are crosseyed. You've sent back Parliament after Parliament, and you've thrown your ear wide to the spell-binding at the General Elections, until they put the *comether* on ye.

"You've gone cap in hand to the master—and what have ye got? You asked for bread and he gev ye a stone.

"In God's name what does it mean? You asked for bread and you got bullets. You asked for warm mercy and ye got the cold steel."

The crowd seemed to Destin to be swaying in the sunlight. He saw a red-headed police inspector with albino eyes draw a notebook from his pocket and watched his pencil point scribble rapidly. In that atmosphere everything was as clearly delineated as though he were looking down from an aeroplane. All things seemed minute and magnified and unreal.

As he went on speaking, Destin noticed how full and resonant his voice had become. But at the back, men were straining to hear and turning to one another to ask—"What is he saying? What is he saying?" He could read the movement of their lips.

"Now," went on Creegan, "after one hundred years at the political game—the game of 'heads I win tails you lose'—you've started another red herring." (Somebody laughed, and it sounded blasphemous.) "You've started a new phase in the game of blind man's buff—the game of Independent Labour Representation. Who was it that put that on ye?"

There was a groan that died away quickly as it had arisen.

"Do ye think for a single moment that the fellows that own everything are going to let ye ballot yourselves into power? Do ye think that all you have to do is to go into the division lobby and register your vote? That everything will pass on from stage to stage without the other fellows taking a hand in the game?"

("No fear, blast 'em!" growled the bass. A man laughed harshly.)

"What do ye think those jokers in blue are down there for? What do ye think they've got thousands of men around here in the alleyways and tens of thousands of men in red below there in the Wellington and Knightsbridge barracks for? Tell me that.

"Ye fools! Can't ye see as plain as the noses on your faces that when ye've played yourselves out at the game of independent labour representation, which may keep you going for a few years longer, the signal will be given and the boys in red and blue set to work? Can't ye see it?"

Away at the back of the people, there was a confused movement, a swaying of heads. Half a dozen uniformed men ran down quickly, like so many pigmies, from the stairs at the far corner of the square and plunged head first into the crowd. The movement increased, then centred into a whirlpool, from which broke another movement that wriggled itself towards the back of the crowd. Then the knot of men appeared, with something

in the middle of them that struggled vainly. They ran up the steps leading out of the square on the left. More than ever, Destin felt everything unreal.

The minute hand was steadily climbing to the quarter. Creegan threw his eye up for a moment and went on. . . .

"This matter of Joe Lanthorne is a matter for every working-man and woman in Britain and Ireland. Lanthorne's fight is not only a national fight—it is an International. The question is—what are you going to do about it?"

"Fight!" screamed a voice from the left.

"'Fight,' ye say. Well how are ye going to fight? Whether ye believe in the vote or believe in the strike, you can't fight the attack on Lanthorne with the vote. This is something that has got to be settled now. If I put one of ye into the ring against a man armed with a knuckle-duster—what's that going to be? a fight or a massacre?

"Yet that is what you've been doing. Fighting with the vote is fighting with the bare fist—fighting against an adversary who has his hand weighted with the gold of Mammon—who has the guns of the army, navy, and police behind him if the weighted hand doesn't do the trick. Do you understand that?

"Do you understand that?" he asked once more and stopped.

A stream of sound gathered in volume until it ran through and around the square. It rose in higher intensity until it was heard like the sound of distant musketry down on Westminster Bridge. The railwaymen were shouting now. The miners had broken loose and were sending out their full-throated cries at the plinth. From where Destin looked at them, he could feel the full beat of one great pulse—could see one yawning mouth—a collective mouth, that cried out—with vengeance and triumph and joy in the heart of it.

Destin felt every throb of that heart in his own as it drove the blood through the arteries of Democracy. Each cry came from him and to him. He *was* the crowd.

Creegan had raised his hand. Quickly, the angry animal before him had sunk again, growling but acquiescent.

"Boys, keep quiet and keep cool—now, and in the fight that is coming. Remember that the fight of the future will be the fight of the barricade and the strike. Remember that this will be settled, not with votes and pretty speeches, not with silk hats and silkier voices, not across the floor of the House of Commons, but on the floor of the People's House—the streets. The hard grey streets ye know so well.

"And if they bring out the soldiers—are they not your brothers and mine? If they bring out the boys in blue—don't they spring from the people? Are not the very warships that rule the seas for a handful of aristocrats manned with our flesh and blood. They may shoot us down to-day at the bidding of Mammon. Will they shoot us down to-morrow?

"If we speak, shall they not listen? If we give the message, will they not hear?"

Steltham had made half a step forward as though to stop the speaker, who, with a fine sweep of the hand, went on without heeding him. By this time the crowd was in the hollow of his voice—and he knew it. A masterly figure of a man he looked, with something brutal in the face—a man of destiny.

"Then what is our answer to be?" he asked in the silence. "Is it to be more bargaining—more dickering—or is it to be the answer of the strike? Which is it to be?"

"Strike! Strike! Strike!"

The sound rose in ever-widening circles, turning in a vortex of rage.

"Strike! Strike! Strike!"

The blue lines were broken now. They were swept into the maw of the mob. The square was a seething maelström of madness.

"Strike! Strike! Strike!"

The sound rose and circled overhead — passed upwards and outwards to the millions of the city, to whom the cry came as the cry of men breaking from the tomb. The dumb, dead mob had found voice.

"Strike! Strike! Strike!"

Denis Destin found his mouth open, whilst from his cracked throat came the sound:

"Strike! Strike! Strike!"

V

ON THE WATERS OF FLEET STREET

DENIS DESTIN had lowered his pen at Fleet Street. Fleet Street didn't trouble. One "free-lance" more or less didn't matter. In Fleet Street nothing matters.

But it mattered to Destin.

His failure ate into him in a vital, disagreeable manner, turning the secretions of his body acid. At least, he always felt it that way.

For he hated failure. Hated it not only as a fighting, competitive animal, with the lust "to make good," but also in a rather fine, impersonal way. Hated it because to him it spelled incompetence. But above and beyond all because it stifled something in him that would not be stifled.

For Destin felt that he could write. Felt that within him there was something which he must express. Something that was too un-flexible and involved to pass the point of his pen. Something that pulsated like an angry tooth.

But to drag this thing from him needed something he had not got. He didn't know how to begin. He didn't even know what he wanted to write. His mind was cosmic. The variety of the Universe appalled him —and he wanted to write on the Universe. He had the Universal Mind.

Day by day he was frozen into the nightmare of impotence he knew so well. The feel underneath of fresh, strong life that was waiting to find expression—that he

ould not express. The feeling that he was walking pon the edge of circumstance—that the world of which e was the axis was turning faster and faster, setting up a vibration that appalled.

Now he had been three months at home, and had not placed a single manuscript.

And whilst this was going on inside him, from the outside was another stress.

His mother had wept silently each time she heard the click-click of the second-hand typewriter he had bought. She did not speak. Only sat there with the same hard, proud face, and the old pulsation coming and going in the mouth like an accusing signal.

His father, volcanic, bombarded him from all angles and at all times. "See what your Socialism has brought you to." "Throwing up an assured position." "Steady, even progress to an honoured place." "The godlessness of the age." And then, to cajolery—"Be a sensible man and go back to the City."

"Go back to the City." He said it, and meant it, that rather than sit in the sheltered meanness of an office, he would go as a navvy on the streets.

Then came another stroke of fate, to prise him lose from all holds. His mother had a second seizure, which left her paralysed from the waist downward. It seemed he had been worrying, and the fine, delicate brain, overwrought, had worn too thin.

Then his father had said the things which could not be unsaid, and so, one evening, when the road was dancing under the fierce rays of the July sun, he had helped a man to carry his one trunk to a mean street not far from the Beech Road, where he found himself in the poor, little room in the fourth floor back.

When the man left him standing there in the middle of the room, the great shoulders came forward, the strong head sunk in the hands, and Denis Destin cried.

Nine pounds and some shillings in his pocket. His typewriter and his brains. Nothing else.

His mind piled up the terrors of his position. Behind him, four or five months of unbroken failure—not a line printed. In front—what?

Should he go back to Peabody and Parsons? Already they had written offering him his old place "if he would be more reasonable in the future." The man who succeeded him had not been a success it seemed.

"More reasonable." Again he felt everything within him rise up against "reasonableness," against that dead, orderly progression of commercial life—against the whole condition of "things as they are." In an instant, his nerves had tautened. His heart beat strongly once more. He would take his life and his chances in his hands. It was the old unconquerableness rising, geyser-like, inside him.

Step by step he ran his mind back over his failures. Why had he failed?

When he was still in the city he had written infrequently—just as the fit seized him. And he had placed a couple of insignificant MSS.

True, they had been badly mutilated before printing. True, that every strong passage—everything which had something of himself in it—had been as ruthlessly cut out as though it had been a cancer. Only the dry bones of "facts" had been left. But still they had passed from the dead MSS. into the life of the printed page.

Fleet Street was not cosmic. It was local—and concentrated. Fleet Street wanted facts.

It burst upon him in that moment that above and beyond all other things, editors wanted "facts." He had always understood they dealt in fictions. It had been drummed into him that newspapers dealt in lies, that the public paid for them.

Then another flash, and he knew that he was living

n a time when the appetite for facts, facts, facts, was voracious and insistent. His *Daily Meteor* streamed with facts. The popular weeklies corruscated with facts. The people to whom he spoke at the street corner night after night, demanded facts. The Trafalgar Square and Hyde Park meetings bristled with facts. Facts poured out from platform, from pulpit, from press. It was the Age of Facts.

Very well. If the public wanted facts—then he would give them facts.

Another flash. Why not find out exactly what editors wanted. He had heard young Wildish say one night that "there was no good writing on spec.—always go and see the old man my boy."

But how to see "the old man"?

He thought of editors as fierce animals. He didn't mind fighting a crowd with all the inspiration that a crowd could give. He was a demagogic animal. But fighting an editor—a shadowy monster who saw nobody, but crouched in his den, shunning the light of day, was another matter.

He could debate and had debated on the platform within the past few months, and that with some distinction. But to be shut up alone with a man in his sanctum—that was something other. And then there was the very good chance that no editor would see him.

But it had to be done. He sat down and wrote two or three letters to the editors of the big dailies, asking them to see him, and awaited the reply, without any hope of receiving one.

He was considerably gratified, however, to learn from the Literary Editor of the *Evening Owl* that he would be delighted to consider anything he sent in: from a nebulous "we" of the *Incubator* that nothing could give them greater pleasure than to look at his work: whilst the *Mocking Bird* even sent him a printed list of "What

we *don't* want." They all seemed to have overlooked his request for an interview. But surely the promise of consideration was better than any interview.

Success at last had opened her arms. He sent in his manuscripts. As regularly, they returned with the slip—"The Editor regrets . . ." He tried the majority of the weeklies with the same result.

Matters were getting serious, even though he only had to pay eight shillings a week for his room and had become an expert in the art of buying food, for no Hammersmith housewife could tell him anything about the places which specialised in cheap bacon, cheap fruit, cheap vegetables. He had under five pounds in his pocket.

In his extremity he thought of the Duchess of Chillington. He wrote and asked her for a letter of introduction to any editor, for the newspaper world and the Duchess were on more than speaking terms. It was said, indeed, that she lived always with a telephone to her ear. The Duchess was "good copy."

The kindhearted Duchess promptly sent him an inflated, gilt-edged, faintly scented letter (her notepaper was one of her ways of defying organised society), introducing him to the editor of the *Daily Meteor*, which left him blushing and grateful and rather surprised at her close knowledge of his powers. Yet it left him a little uncomfortable too.

A terrible anti-Socialist paper, the *Meteor*. Meteoric in name and nature. Went in for "the largest circulation," making its appeal equally to duke or dustman. Even had an old crusted port country squire circulation to give it tone. Always had the earliest, and despite its critics, the most accurate telegrams, and for its pains was called a liar by its less effective competitors, which weekly saw large bites taken out of their circulations. Seemed to have a telephone to the South Pole and the

infernal regions, not to mention the Higher Powers, for the *Meteor* could be celestial at times.

The *Meteor* was a microphonous ear which caught every whisper of the world, and a megaphonic mouth which could trumpet its news to eager millions, or shut itself up as close as a Bank of England vault.

Destin was in the roar of Fleet Street, with his golden envelope in his pocket. His confidence was complete when he felt it between his fingers.

He saw pallid, over-driven men running up and down the narrow street like lines of ants. Saw long-haired young men, their hats dinted ingeniously, who walked uncertainly, carrying large pasteboard covers under their arms. Each unit of the crowd seemed to know its business and the shortest way to it—all except the young men with the pasteboards.

He felt happy to be part of this hurrying, buzzing thoroughfare, with his work to do like the others and his foot on the first round of the spiral of success. He felt the social sense grow largely within him. His heart beat faster and his brain grew giddy as he passed down one of the side streets to Bethlehem House.

Then he caught the hum—or was it the growl?—of something. As he walked along, it grew to a roar—a stedfast, insistent roar with a pulsation in the heart of it. Then, and he scarcely knew why, he was afraid.

Down there through the windows that ran below the level of the pavement, he caught the gleam of steel, like the gleam of teeth. Shadows moved dimly amongst those whirling arms and voracious cylinders that vomited out the white sheets faster than the eye could follow.

Into the building, and there the roar and thud shook the floor on which he stood. Muffled, it held the great building upright in its vortex.

The roar made everything unreal. In a dream he felt

himself mounting to the stars, always followed by that roar. In a dream he passed down a long corridor and through a room, at the table of which twenty or thirty men were scribbling hurriedly.

Then he found himself in a spacious, unobtrusive room, standing on a soft pile carpet—with the roar cut off on the other side of the door as if he were in a safe. Yet he could hear it, stifled, trying to creep in under the door.

At the square mahogany table sat a young-looking man, with steel-grey eyes, and a big, compressed mouth. His hair was grey, but he might have been Destin's own age.

In his hand he held the Duchess's letter.

He did not speak, but looked squarely at Destin, who stood there, tonguebound. There was something about this man that made him helpless.

"Well?" The word was cut off at the lips as though by a scissors.

Destin stood there in ungainly silence, his shoulders hunched, his long arms hanging at his sides, like a boxer waiting for the gong. There was a cold quick air about the man that angered him. Some under-strapper he supposed.

"I wanted to see the editor," he said awkwardly.

"I am the editor," said the man in the chair.

Destin didn't know that he was looking at one of Bethlehem House's wonderful young men—that House where it was said that every office boy had an editor's contract in his pocket.

"Oh!" was all Destin could say.

"Please say what you want," said the man at the table curtly.

In a moment Destin had flamed into self-control. He resented the tone. For that matter, he resented the whole place.

The man did not ask him to take a chair, so he took one.

The big mouth relaxed a little. A gleam shot through the eyes.

"Please tell me what you want me to do for you," he said more kindly.

"You have seen the Duchess of Chillington's letter?" said Destin.

"Yes, I've seen it all right," said the great man. "If you take my advice you won't throw those letters around too much."

Destin was again combative.

"I want to write for you," he blurted out.

"What can you write?"

What could he write? Why, he could write anything, and he said so.

"'Anything' in Fleet Street is 'nothing,' Mr. Destin. I want to know what you know?"

What did he know? Here again was that demand for facts. What did he know?

Not getting an answer, the man at the table went on—"Fleet Street knows only two sorts of men: those who know what the others don't, and . . . the others. Are you one of 'the others'?"

"I know the labour movement," said Destin, with a fine flash of inspiration and lying. He had been exactly four months and a half in it.

"Look through there," said the man at the table, pointing across an angle of the building to the room he had passed through on his way in, where the men were still writing without cessation. "There are half a dozen of those men who know the labour movement backwards, and there isn't a single one of them who isn't holding down his job by the skin of his teeth. If I lift a hand, I can get a hundred like them, who also know the labour movement and who will write on it from now

till the crack of doom or the sack." And he smiled quite nicely.

"But they don't know it," challenged Destin. "Your labour articles show that," he said daringly. "They don't give the facts."

The man smiled at him amusedly.

"Do you know what a modern newspaper is?" he said. This man had one weakness. He had to talk about the passion of his life—the newspaper.

"The modern newspaper is an ear and a mouth—a great ear that scoops everything and a discreet mouth that only speaks sometimes of what the ear has gathered. There are 'facts' and 'facts.'

"The newspaper is out to give the facts—sometimes. But 'facts' are the things that move the minds of men, and therefore have to be given with discretion.

"For we are the masters of mankind. The spoken word is often forgotten the moment it is uttered—the power of print to fix the written word has an uncanny property—that of swaying men's minds, forming their political, and, what is to-day much the same thing, their religious opinions.

"That is the miracle known as 'what the public want,' or what it thinks it wants. 'What the public want' means circulation, and circulation means power. Democracy is a dangerous animal—it needs tickling. It is our business—yours and mine—to tickle it. It can be led on a thread, but not driven by whips of steel."

The man was pacing up and down the room, talking frantically, but as though he were speaking to someone else—to something inside him.

"The public to-day demand facts. We give it facts. But it wants the facts it likes. We give it the facts it likes, or thinks it likes.

"It is our business to get those facts. We spare

nothing—in face of the fiercest of competitions we dare spare nothing—to get them—neither money, nor conscience, nor even life itself. The paper with the facts of the right sort is the paper with the power.

"Think of our power. A man sits here with a telephone to his ear. From that 'phone runs a maze of wires which film like spider webs across the world, girding it in a net. Everywhere we have our 'cloud of silent witnesses,' listening and recording. It gives to the writer a power never before wielded by a single man—even a Buonaparte—over the thoughts and therefore over the destinies of millions.

"A hundred years ago the newspaper was nothing. At the time of Waterloo, it took half a week to get the news to the London Stock Exchange—to day it wouldn't take half an hour—even the fluctuating fortunes of the battle, each cavalry charge, could be followed moment by moment throughout Europe. And strange as it is, it is the fact that we can give the-man-in-the-street the news of a cavalry charge or an aeroplane flight immediately it has happened, which gives us our power over him.

"That is the power of 'the topical.' Man has become a listening animal the curosity of which is unappeasable—which lives on facts. He comes to the hand that feeds him. But his food must be fresh.

"Democracy to-day through its curiosity is the willing victim of suggestion. It is on this that wars are made; loans are granted; cabinets rise and fall. It is a human being sitting in some obscure room in Fleet Street, who, sending the inspired word to waiting Democracy, moulds the minds of men, making or marring national destinies.

"The newspaper builds up barriers, but it is also breaking them down. We are the masters of men, as I said, but they, in the long run, are ours.

"We shall always go on mastering and being

mastered, and when we have run an etheric 'wireless' throughout the star systems, we shall rule the Universe."

This was a man after Destin's own heart. He didn't think there was such a human being in Fleet Street.

The editor pulled himself up in his stride, and like a man coming out of a dream turned to Destin. "But you haven't come to hear that. Now you know however the kind of job you're tackling. Have you any other reason why I should let you write for us?"

"But," said Destin despairingly as he saw his chance slipping from him, "your public want labour facts."

"Do they?" He smiled whimsically. "Are you sure?"

"At any rate the masses of working people who read your paper want the facts about the progress of the labour movement put before them by an expert?"

"Do they?" said the editor again, a little wearily. "Do you know what's troubling the factory girl? not the price of factory labour or the eight hour day, but what the Duke said to the Duchess in the conservatory after dinner."

In a last despairing plunge, Destin put in—"But why not make a new experiment in the *Meteor?* why not have a regular labour article written by a man in the labour movement? I am a Socialist."

"So am I," said the amazing young man before him, "and you won't have to go through Fleet Street with a fine tooth-comb to find a hundred or two more, editors and otherwise. And when 'the largest circulation' is a Socialist circulation, the *Daily Meteor* will be Socialist. They say that 'trade follows the flag,' but in Fleet Street 'the flag follows trade.'"

Destin stood with his mouth open.

"And what is more," said the great man, "if you like to go into Fleet Street and proclaim it, I shall not mind. We don't ask what a man's politics are in Fleet Street."

He walked to the door and opened it. Destin had failed. As he passed out the voice behind said:

"All the same, if you care to send me an odd article, I will have a look at it, but send it to me personally. There's my card. But, mind, I promise nothing."

Destin was caught up in the roar. It came through the building after him—it came behind him as he went out into the street—and even in the distance he could hear the thing muttering after him.

VI

MANICURED REVOLUTION

THEN began a hand to hand struggle with fortune in Cross Street, where he had his room. Four weeks went by after his *Daily Meteor* interview, but no sign came from the editor. He had sent in two articles, in which he had set out pretty fully his views upon current labour questions. The first had come back within three days with the usual printed slip; the second had remained out a week, after which, for another week, he spent his diminishing halfpennies upon the *Meteor* expecting to see it in print.

Now he was looking at his second article, with—"Damn your views. Where are your facts?" scrawled across it in blue pencil.

He hated the *Meteor*. He hated the man with the grey eyes. He was adding insult to injury. He sulked. The *Meteor* could soar to heaven with its circulation or sink into the pit before he sent it a word.

This lasted a week, when his old hatred of failure asserted itself. He wrote a short thousand-word article upon the Syndicalist movement, giving what Wildish had once called coarsely "the guts" of the thing, indicating the line of advance. He despised it. It was a corpse of an article. He had prostituted his talent.

It stayed out like the previous ones. He didn't even trouble to buy a copy of the paper and awaited its return.

He was walking through the Underground station

at Hammersmith, when the station turned round him. It seemed as though somebody else were looking at the scarlet *Meteor* poster with the words—"THE SYNDICALIST MENACE," and in smaller type—"By a Syndicalist."

He saw his name in print for the first time on page 4. He had drawn first blood. The rest seemed easy. Having one's articles upon posters was the easiest thing in the world. All you had to do was to "write down." After all it was legitimate enough when a fellow had to earn his bread and butter.

He was wrong. Many months went by before the *Meteor* took another article. However, he began to pick up a few shillings here and there in all kinds of despised weeklies, and, though it seemed impossible, when the money totalled up, it was keeping him alive.

In the previous months he had been under the impression that he was "writing down" to the crowd, until one day he discovered that he was writing as well as he knew how. Not writing what he wanted to write, but putting his best into what he did write. It was humiliating. . . .

By this time Destin was committed to the Socialist left wing. The Trafalgar Square meeting had confirmed him. Each night saw him laying down the law —expostulating, arguing, and even fighting with his audiences.

"Direct action" was his text. Physical force and the General Strike. His mind, like his voice, had become megaphonic. Giant policemen listened in sleepy good humour to the fulminations of Creegan's new lieutenant, for with the meteoric rise of Creegan's star in the political firmament, Destin with Wildish and one or two others found himself flaming upwards giddily. Wildish did not exactly declare himself against all political action, but he was contemptuous enough of the House of which he was a member, and fierce enough to be to all

intents and purposes a Syndicalist Simon Pure, dyed in the wool.

The pace was hair-raising. Like a man on a tight rope, he felt he had to run forwards faster and faster or fall. The Direct Actionists had held one or two big Hyde Park meetings, there being much talking, dust, and noise. The magnet at the second meeting had been an Italian Syndicalist leader of the name of Marianetti, who nearly caused a riot on the platform through his fatal fluency in Anglo-Italian, which prevented his leaving off. He was full of fire and facts, but he left Destin a little cold too. There was something about his nondescript hair and gingery, upturned moustaches which left everything he said a little colourless to Destin. The crowd however shouted for him.

But the distinguished Frenchwoman who was the principal speaker at the second platform satisfied him. There was a slash and sweep about her words which went well with her tall, well-developed bust, small hips, and flaming Buffalo Bill hat, which would have looked flamboyant and ridiculous on anyone else.

She riddled the politicals, doing it in excellent English too, poking fun especially at Steltham and McGraw. She was called Satalia—just that. Everyone addressed her by that single name and forgot any other, if she had ever had another.

After listening to her speech, Destin felt more assured than ever of the intuitions which had led him into the Direct Action camp. True, there were one or two doubtful references in her speech about the freedom of the individual which left him a little chilled, for the lady on the platform seemed to regard "liberty" and "license" as the same thing, but he forgot all this quickly.

Creegan had been there, but he was cold, almost brutal, to Mme. Satalia. Destin thought it might be a little

political jealousy, but he put it from him as unworthy.

After that second meeting, the Syndicalists found themselves political Ishmaelites. Their's was a motley enemy, for their former comrades in that "Mahomed's coffin of revolution," as Damascene phrased it, the Social-Democratic Union, the orthodox Labourists of the Workers' Party, and the Law itself, found themselves in awkward comradeship against the new force. The Social Democrats felt hurt at the secession of so many of their members to the camp of ultra revolution, after abandoning political action, in which they believed, provided it were of the proper, militant, class-conscious brand; whilst it was only natural they should not easily forgive the stealing of their own revolutionary thunder. As impossibilists, who had declared against the panacea of political action, the Workers' Party of course had no use for them.

All this however put Creegan's men into effective isolation, being able to criticise not only what they called happily "the labour fakirs," but "Mahomed's coffin," which hung between that paradise of orthodoxy, the Workers' Party, and the hell of revolution, and pluming themselves upon pioneering into the New Jerusalem.

As he gained fluency and power, Destin found himself giving three parts of his speeches to criticisms of the other comrades. As a critic, he was megosauric, but there were difficulties on the constructive side, which, however, he got out of by simply saying—"Aren't the workers ten to one? The workers have the future in their own hands. Let them refuse to sell their labour-power, and capitalism must fall."

It was a watertight argument. To him there could be no reply. It was one of his new "facts."

Sometimes, only sometimes, a Trade Union branch would ask the Direct Actionists to send a speaker to

propound the new gospel. At the beginning in these Unions he was flattered at the warmth of his reception, until he discovered that it invariably came from a small section of the younger men, the men who, after Wildish, were coming to be known as "the young men in a hurry." And even this was only the case in some Unions, which seemed to vary as much in psychology as their individual members.

Most of the branch leaders, who, as a rule, were eager, active young men, whilst criticising the lack of militancy of the Parliamentary leaders, frankly avowed themselves in favour of the National Workers' Party, and were mostly members of its Socialist wing, the Independent Socialists, whilst the older men, though saying little, looked askance at the new method of progress by barricade. Generally speaking, and with one notable exception, that of the South Wales miners, eager fiery Celts, with a strong Syndicalist impregnation, the new propaganda was not a success.

But one or two debates he had in local halls were more like the real thing. Here he had "wiped the floor" with his more orthodox opponents. For Destin, under the lash of the crowd, was very hard indeed to stop when he got under weigh. Each day saw him gaining new courage and, what he had begun to regard as an essential of life for the Syndicalist movement—advertisement. By this time the Syndicalists were running upon the same lines as the *Meteor*, minus the respectability.

He was now in charge of "Creegan's Invincibles," a sort of flying corps which the Direct Actionists flung into Workers' Party meetings. They were composed of fanatical young men who were being used as the nucleus and inspiration for the Direct Actionists within the Unions, and were beginning to make themselves felt. They had their own headquarters in one of the back-blocks near the Mile End Road, from which they

swooped down with masses of propaganda literature out of all proportion to their numbers, with which they flooded the streets and the Unions.

They now formed a standing headline in the *Daily Meteor*—"Creegan's Invincibles Again!" which took a dignified interest in the new fanaticism, and even went so far as to pat them on the back in a leaderette, which left Destin with mixed emotions. Still, it was all to the good.

One of the backers of the Invincibles was Miss Craven, who, taking no active part herself, was, however, the goddess in the machine. As Destin often said, they would have been lost without her help. He was constantly at the Hampstead flat, where there were always badges to be made, policies to be discussed, or a sympathiser (influential) to be met at afternoon tea. Miss Craven did not spare herself, or her table, or her pocket.

But she was always cool—never flurried. And through it all she kept her virginal inaccessibility.

Miss Craven it seemed was giving "a little friendly talkee-talkee" for a few sympathisers at "The Hut," as she called her flat. It was most essential to the future of the cause that Destin should be present as there would be a good chance to rope in a few likely ones.

When he entered the little antechamber that served as a hall for "The Hut," Destin caught the scent of hot tea and cake and heard through the open door the infernal clatter he knew so well.

Miss Craven's flat was as she said "a Liberty flat"—Liberty by design and by nature. The cool, water-green curtains shaded to a nicety the polished oak floors, on which rugs from the Orient gave a precarious foothold to the mass of humanity which slid, or limped, or fell from wall to wall. The distemper was a shade of delicate grey. There were some reproductions of Hals and other masters, with a genuine Corot, whilst two blue

Chinese vases stood on either side of the open fireplace like sentinel dragons.

Divans that were gargantuan cushions, took the place of chairs, whilst there was an absence of *bric-à-brac* which did credit to the owner's taste.

Vesta Craven, in a sea-green gown which clung to her like a mermaid, was standing near the door. She nodded to him proprietorially as to one she saw every day, holding her Russian cigarette between her first and second fingers to the manner born, not like the many other ladies who were smoking with an air of desperation, who held their cigarettes awkwardly between thumb and forefinger as though they were needles.

He drifted into the group, which was remarkable. All Miss Craven's groups were remarkable. A young man clothed in a sort of collarless Greek garment, barefooted and sandalled, his straight, lank hair hanging to his shoulders, was speaking about Epictetus. Epictetus it seemed was not known enough in England. His was a complete philosophy. The gospel of manual labour-digging with the spade for instance—"the simple life," "the return to nature"—these were the ideals of Epictetus or of the speaker—Destin could not be sure which, as he was thinking of the likeness to a picture of Christ he had seen in an Irish chapel. But "Epictetus" looked indeed a weak edition of all the Christs that had ever been to encourage him.

Miss Craven puffed daintily at her cigarette, with her name in gold on the side. When the gentleman in the robe spoke of digging, she nodded her head emphatically, possibly to encourage him.

The philosopher was in the middle of one of his dreamiest periods, in which bananas was the *leit motiv*, when Miss Craven, rather rudely it seemed to Destin, who felt quite sorry for the speaker, fluttered across the room and shook by both hands a young girl, dressed in

white, who had just entered. Two or three others had run over and were clustering around her adoringly.

"Now, virgin queen," said one of them, "tell us all about it. How did you escape the cops?"

"Oh! *do* tell us," the others chorused ecstatically.

The girl they addressed, a rather plain, pert-looking girl, with an upturned nose and baby cheeks, seemed singularly self-possessed and was clothed in a fine air of indifference. She was obviously used to homage and as obviously bored.

There was something so cherubic and childlike about the girl that Destin was surprised to find everybody staring at her. A woman behind him said—"So that's Pamela, is it?" Then he remembered.

This was *the* Pamela Priggle who had chained herself either to the Clock Tower or the Speaker's Chair—nobody seemed to know which. Who had drafted a scheme for tunnelling under the House of Commons from a house opposite, which was found by the police to be full of the earth taken out. The stand-by of the halfpenny picture press, which always, when in doubt, "played Pamela."

Now she destroyed the glamour of her reputation by asking in matter-of-fact tones for a cup of tea. There was an enthusiastic rush to get it for her.

The girls who stood around her chattering volubly were all fashionably dressed in a desperate, ragged way. Their compressed, turned-in mouths, their eager, quick eyes, and a general air of living in the middle of events, contrasted with Vesta Craven's air of delicate languor.

Above the chatter, he caught the piercing voice of a woman older than the rest. A harsh-featured, hollow-cheeked, pallid woman, fashionably dressed in black. She was speaking to a girl bizarrely clothed in a black and yellow checked tunic gathered at the waist by a

green snake belt, a skirt and stockings of purple, and sandalled feet. When this girl moved she walked flat-footed like a ballet dancer. Her short black curls, monkeyish but attractive face, and brilliant black eyes arrested the attention.

She was speaking to the woman in black in low, hoarse accents, her companion cutting across her with a voice piercing and hard.

"But don't you see," the latter was saying, "don't you see that if you give the vote to *all* men and women you will let in the common, uneducated horde? When we women have the vote on a property qualification which will give the vote to refined and educated women, then of course we shall vote against Adult Suffrage. Pamela says so." This, as an appeal beyond which there is no argument.

"Oh, damn Pamela!" said the girl in the sandals bluntly. "I'm an anarchist, and I don't believe in Government, by votes or otherwise, but if you give the vote to what you call 'ladies,' then the working-woman should have it too."

"I fear," said the other woman haughtily, "that neither our language nor our ideals have much in common." And she turned across the floor, whilst the girl in the tunic laughed venemously after her.

Destin had been listening to all this, when there was an exclamation behind him in the doorway, and there swayed Damascene in his cloak, which flamed back from his shoulders in scarlet splendour, the sweeping sombrero of black velvet held in his right hand, whilst his left rested upon a black cane with an ivory top carved into the head of a gargoyle, which spat malignantly at the room.

"Good God! this is too much," he murmured under his breath as he clutched at the wall.

Miss Craven had run forward, leaving her friend,

who, for all her indifference, seemed to throw her nose a trifle into the air.

"What is it, Damascene? Do tell me."

"What is it?" repeated that agitated young man, whose monocle stared glassily at her. "What is it? Good God, ma'am! can't you see?"

He pointed with the cane at a scarlet vase which flamed in the corner. "That vase against that wall has nearly cost me my life."

"And I thought you would like it too," pouted Miss Craven. "I put it there this morning."

"'*Put* it there.' '*Put* it there,'" he repeated. "You don't *put* vases, you let them put themselves.

"Scarlet against those curtains. What are you thinking of Vesta?" he asked, sinking cloak and all upon a yellow and green divan.

And there he sat for the rest of the afternoon enthroned, still wearing his cloak, and grasping his hat and stick. To Destin he looked ridiculous, but there was something magnificent about him too.

Three or four young men had stolen to his side. There was an intangible something which to Destin made their faces all of a strange *camaraderie*. It might have been a shadow or it might have been the light—like the greeney-brown reflection on the face of a man when he bends over a glass of absinthe. In the face of the one who was speaking to Damascene in a low, sweet voice, almost like that of a girl, a tracery of lines was whipped.

Denis Destin caught snatches of their conversation. ". . . I told Josephs I wouldn't pay a thousand. It might not be a genuine Carillo. You know, Damascene, that little yellow spot was not underneath."

"But you know, dear boy, that there are three in existence without the spot."

"Yes, I know that, but I wasn't taking any chances.

And then my room is now a scarlet and grey and the vase would thunder against the background."

All four men spoke in slow, even voices, whilst they sipped their tea and nibbled delicately at their cake. One of them had a curiously protruding vision. It was something Destin had noticed about Damascene himself.

A threatening figure was staring down at Damascene where he lolled. The hands were clasped easily behind the fan-shaped back. The face was contemptuous. Damascene glanced up as he felt the stare.

"Creegan, my dear chap, how are you? How energetic you were in the Square the other Sunday. How *do* you do it?"

Damascene's friends looked at Creegan disdainfully.

"One would imagine you believed in all that sort of thing and so on and so forth," went on Damascene, fanning himself with his sombrero.

"The difference between you and me, Mr. Damascene," said Creegan roughly, "is that I believe in something, and you in nothing." The other remained perfectly unruffled.

"But you are so damnably personal, my dear Creegan," he expostulated.

"And you are wrong—indeed you are." He was speaking earnestly as though to himself. "I believe in Socialism just as much as you do, but I don't believe in getting hot over it. Life isn't worth it. For every one reason you can give me for believing in Socialism, I'll give you twenty, and much more elegantly."

"I believe in Socialism, because I believe in the people," said Creegan sullenly.

"The people! My dear fellow! How shockingly old-fashioned you are. '*Vox populi—vox Dei.*' Who are the people? What do the people know?

"Why the people would not understand the harmony of those Chinese vases and the distemper and this floor,

nor the time and trouble it took me to assemble them. The people spit and smell and are a damn nuisance.

"Why, my dear Creegan—and you will understand no personal reference is intended—you can't dine with the people or wine with them. You can't write for the people, though I admit you can speak to them.

"Now I'm a Socialist because I don't like ugly things —including the people. Let us abolish the people. To do that you must have Socialism. When you've abolished the people you will have abolished all that is worth abolishing."

The young men were smiling softly, like cats it seemed to Destin.

"Well, Mr. Damascene," said Creegan in a low, harsh voice, the brogue rolling through it angrily, "ye can talk about abolishing the people, of 'art for art's sake,' and all the rest of it. Ye can talk of Socialism as ye talk of a painted woman or a beautiful room, but I tell ye that the people are a living, breathing thing. They are the basis of everything—it is they who build your beautiful rooms and give their leisure to the architects to design them as they give it to your painters who paint your pictures and their daughters for your light-o'-loves. Everything rises from them—everything goes back to them. In a sense, the artist *is* the people. Sneer at the mob—laugh at it—but, by God! the people are your master and mine."

And Creegan strode away, leaving Damascene laughing heartily on his cushion as he turned to his Platonists.

Destin looked at Creegan's shoulders passing through that crowd as though they were pigmies. Then he looked at Damascene. And then, as he looked, he felt that he wanted to put his foot on that smiling face. He couldn't understand it, for he had rather liked this

man with the monocle and the everlasting sleepy smile. Now he felt as if he were something monstrous, something to be trodden underfoot.

He had forgotten this, however, as he caught that delicate odour of "White Rose" which he now knew so well. A little fresh hand was on his arm. A little voice was saying in his ear—"Come, Destin."

The sound of his name, unadorned, thrilled him. It put him on a level with Damascene. He was one of them. It was the collective-sense—the feeling of exotic comradeship.

"Let us talk here, away from all these people." She led him to a partially screened corner.

"I want to talk about the meeting for Sunday . . . Destin." There was a scarcely perceptible pause before the name. Again it thrilled him with a delicious feeling of *camaraderie*, but with something else in it too.

As she bent forward, her elbows on her knees and the finger-ends of her little shapely hands touching, he sensed the slender girlishness—with something womanly and satisfying, and something irritating in it too. He sensed the slender limbs and delicate woman-curves. The perfume that came from her took possession of him. With it, that indefinable *odor feminina*.

It passed through and about him, and mingled with the scent of the tea, the colours of the room—with the whole exotic whirl of living breathing beings. He surrendered himself to it.

Many times before, when in the late hours they had been discussing ways and means far into the night, this anæsthesia of woman had come to him—almost lulled him more than once into something of which he could see neither the beginning nor the end—had impelled him to the edge of something direct and desperate.

For Denis Destin had a sensuous side—an eating, corroding, shadowy side, which found itself in subtle

but violent contrast to that other side—that hard, sterner idealism.

No woman had ever been so provocative to Destin as this girl who sat near him—so tantalising—so altogether desirable. This afternoon in particular she was alluring. Yet she was only speaking about that Sunday meeting.

Hitherto she had always kept him at a distance—with an inflection, a word, she had held him at arm's length. Now, although she was speaking of meetings and speakers, there was something intimate, something surrendering, something winning. And Destin lost himself.

With all his self-assurance, he felt humble with this girl. Felt unsure. Now, as she sat by him, for the first time it ran through his mind that he loved her.

He had never thought of that with her. There was something about Vesta Craven which shut out the thought of marriage.

Even as he thought it, he found himself bending forward, speaking passionately to her. Asking her if she felt only to him as a comrade. Whether she cared for him a little otherwise.

The clatter of the cups was deafening. The smother of words numbing. But even through it all he could not fail to notice her *sang froid*—her splendid coolness. It chilled him, but it held him too. . . .

And now she was laughing—a low laugh that came and went deeply like the glug-glug of a nightingale. "Dear boy," she said, and for one tiny moment rested her fingers on his knee. "Perhaps I do. We shall see. . . ."

Angry a little, he was following it up by asking her to say what she meant, when a woman in a diaphonous gown and henna wig, a sort of elderly Babylonian dancing girl, followed by half a dozen men and women,

had run across the room and appealed to his companion.

"Now, Vesta, you shall be the arbiter. Enid here is talking most shockingly. She says she believes in 'free love.' And Ella Tosti says it is the only honest thing. She says if you are an anarchist and a vegetarian, you must be a 'free lover.' That's not true is it? Look at the guilty couple over there caught in *flagrante delicto*." And she sniggered.

She pointed to a tall, pale, hollow-cheeked girl who stood against the mantelpiece speaking to the girl in sandals whom Destin had seen before. Vesta Craven laughed and said to Destin, "Come." There was again that air of the proprietor which flattered but annoyed him also.

They went over to the two girls.

"Repeat what you said, you naughty girl," said the lady of the wig.

The tall girl replied quietly, as she sucked at her cigarette, "There is nothing much to repeat—only that I believe in 'free love,' sexual freedom, call it what you will. I am only putting into words what three-fourths of you believe in *and* practice—or would if you dared . . . much the same as the outside world you know." Her words came cuttingly.

The mouth, thin, was compressed. She wore a fringe, frowsy and pale, French fashion. There was an air of in-brooding—of a light behind those pale eyes as though she were consumed by some hidden fire that tormented her.

"Free love," repeated in a horrific undertone one of Miss Priggle's young ladies in a lamp-shade skirt. "What we want to-day is not more license, but less. If I had my way, I would make every marriage a life-long union, and punish any infraction of it with hanging. I have burned a few churches in my time, but all the

same I would stop this registry office scandal, and compel everybody to be married by a clergyman. It gives some guarantee of permanency."

The girl in sandals burst in—"Rot! Do you know a single happy marriage? Be honest now. Is man a polygamous animal or is he not? Come—put it plainer still—is not woman a polygamous animal too when you go deep enough? Don't the divorce courts show that? What is the logical outcome of that but free mating? When men and women can leave each other when they feel inclined, there will be no more prostitution and no more 'hidden plague.'"

"I don't go as far as you, dear," tittered the lady from Babylon nastily. "But there's something in it too."

"Have you practised what you preach?" put in the tall girl quietly, looking at Ella Tosti with cold contempt.

The other blenched. "My private morals are no business of anybody," she stammered. "Such a question is a stupid insult."

"Because if you have, it is your business to say so," said the tall girl. "I haven't, but I wish to God I could."

The eyes of the speaker glowed as though the quenchless fire inside were blazing again. She had the eaten, suppressed look of the virgin who is passing the thirties. No one there doubted her.

Miss Craven held herself aloof, though not Puritanically aloof, from this talk of free love. Destin thought she looked daintier than ever, with her air of friendly exclusiveness. Creegan was prowling up and down the outskirts of the crowd like a caged tiger, whilst two other girls, who looked like burned out matches, were sucking their cigarettes eagerly and tearing the subject to pieces. But what Destin noticed was that nobody cared to say they had passed from theory to practice.

Whilst he was thinking on this, he found that the discussion in some unaccountable way had shifted to vegetarianism and vivisection.

He was carried away in the babel that ensued, in which he caught—"the shedding of blood"—"licensed torturers"—"corpses of animals"—"uncooked food"—"sun-kissed fruit"—whilst the clatter became unbearable.

The floor had become a mosaic of expostulations, chatterings, arguments. The dancing girl was emphasising with a bejewelled hand some point in the corner, whilst near her, calm and placid, Epictetus was talking on in the steady even voice which Destin had heard when he entered the room. The girl with the cherub face was now talking rapidly, as he could see by her lips, for no sound reached him—whilst she drew something rapidly with a fountain pen, taken from the chatelaine at her waist, upon a piece of paper for the benefit of the coterie which surrounded her adoringly.

Damascene sat on his cushion smiling, holding a court of young men, who lounged about him on divans and cushions which they had dragged around him.

The clamour was terrifying. The scent—the flash of jewels—the bare feet of Epictetus—the rustle of silks—the shimmering movement—and through it all the fresh dainty presence of Vesta Craven, who sat there quite coolly, sipping her tea and mouthing her cigarette.

Creegan alone stood aloof. He was in the corner, half crouching, looking out of the window, his eyes set across the roof-tops of London, now turning to molten bronze in the dying furnace of the September sun.

Destin wondered of what he was thinking.

VII

THE RIGHT TO GET DRUNK

DESTIN saw it in his *Meteor*. A paragraph under "Odds and Ends."

"Some men at Bowchester, on the Great North-Western Railway, are threatening to come out owing to the suspension of a goods driver for drunkenness. Not much importance is attached to the threats. The failure of similar threats, made at the Trafalgar Square protest meeting last June, is still fresh in the minds of the public."

A little clerk in the corner of the railway carriage had caught sight of the paragraph at the same time. "I say, Harry, here's another of those drunken railwaymen suspended, and the usual talk of strike. I suppose they'll go on strike for the right to get drunk next." He laughed to his companion, who replied with a little throaty crackle.

Several others joined in, one man, a rubicund stockbroker, giving his theory of strike-stopping—what he called the theory of the mailed fist. "Settle 'em in a stiff," he said lightheartedly, "but what *can* you expect of the present government?"

It seemed that each man there had his pet theory, from blank bludgeoning, to bargaining and "doing the fellars in the eye."

The carriage having settled the matter comfortably, it may be imagined that Destin's late incursion into the argument, with "shock tactics" delivered like a charge

of heavy cavalry, with much smashing and slashing, carried dismay into the ranks of "things as they are." As one man in the corner, with a preposterously pale face and heavy jowl said—"Here was a man who by his appearance was a respectable member of the middle-classes, the backbone of the country, encouraging anarchy in the broad light of day. Where *were* you?"

When the train reached the terminus, it seemed that the Bowchester trouble was taking head. That early halfpenny, the *Twinkler*, published nominally for late news, but actually for racing tips, had even brought out a placard—"RAILWAY STRIKE THREATENED," whilst its rival, the *Night Bird*, made no bones about it, but declared in extra big type—"STRIKE FOR RIGHT TO GET DRUNK!" In fact, as time went on, the railwaymen and insobriety became synonymous to the-man-in-the-street, who saw everywhere drunken drivers, drunken guards, and drunken porters—a saturnalia of delirium tremens on wheels.

As the day came to a close and Destin had finished his editorial calls, Fleet Street began to hum. You could feel it in the air and hear it raucously on the cold December wind. "Extra Speshul. Grite Rilewye Strike! . . . Speshul!!" Passing down Bouverie Street, there was a maddened mob of ragged sporting-capped newspaper boys at the counter of the *Owl*, screaming for "pipers." As fast as a boy got a bundle he ducked under the crowd, and breaking his way out, scuttled off, screaming—"'Orrible Threat by Creegan."

"Creegan." At the name, unknown to the-man-in-the-street a few months before, men fumbled quickly in their pockets and gave pennies for halfpenny papers, the boys running along, dodging in and out of the traffic, whilst rushing past them went dilapidated but workmanlike bicycles ridden by crouching monkeys with open bags bulging with distended packets of papers, wheeling here,

under a horse's nose, there, under a policeman's, and overrunning the highways and byeways.

The *Kensington*, dignified as ever, simply put in black type on white ground the words—"CREEGAN AGAIN." No notes of exclamation about the *Kensington*.

Late into the night, when the cold moon flooded the broad streets, a poster fluttered out—"50,000 MEN ON STRIKE!" But that was the *Twinkler*, and nobody took the *Twinkler* seriously, though what the *Twinkler* didn't know it guessed and was right much oftener than it had any right to be. As he passed along the Embankment, Destin heard the growl of the giant in Bethlehem House. He could see the miles of paper fed into the maw of the monster and those one and a half millions of the digested matter pouring out, running on motor vans to the special trains, waiting to scatter them over Britain.

In Bethlehem House he could see lights twinkling. There must be big work on. And the thought came to him of what the editor had said to him of the power of the press.

The next morning came a line from Creegan, scribbled in an angular, powerful hand with heavy down strokes, as though it were written with a pickaxe: "Bowchester, December 14. This time it is the real thing. Go with Wildish and feel the pulse of the London dockers. Write me to headquarters of railwaymen's union.—B. C."

Out in the streets, and the *Twinkler*, liar or not, had run up to "100,000 MEN OUT. STRIKE SPREADING." Then the *Daily Worker*, the organ of the National Workers' Party, curiously restrained—"BIG RAILWAY STRIKE." He paid his halfpenny for the *Worker* and found the strike relegated to the lower columns of the front page and about four inches of matter. In a leaderette there were some vague references to "throwing over the leaders . . ." "anarchic action . . ." and "we do hope that Mr. Creegan will keep himself in hand."

After he had made a call upon the editor of a weekly, who had wired him that morning and who wanted him to write an article on "What the Workers REALLY Want," he went down to the Syndicalist headquarters. He had already telephoned Wildish, who promised to meet him there "any time he liked." From the height of a bus at the Bank, he saw on a placard—"LONDON DOCKERS COMING OUT. MR. BELCH TALKS."

The *Kensington*, for once startled out of its customary dignity, had so far forgotten itself as to put on a poster—"THE CADS AND THE RADS;" presumably a reference to one of the "understandings" it was always alleging against the left (Radical) wing of Liberalism. "The Cads," it frankly said, were those working men who, "forgetting the best traditions of labour and that 'Laborare est orare,' had actually demanded the right for an engine driver to become intoxicated—a man who every day had hundreds of lives in his charge," (it had got slightly mixed had the *Kensington*, for the man who was suspended was the driver of a goods train with nothing on board but himself, his fireman, and guard) "who had been found disgustingly drunk in the streets of Bowchester. The fact that he was 'off duty' at the time, and the denials of his fellows, does not make his offence any the less heinous. . . ." It quite broke down in its leader in the face of such depravity, and it was all very dignified and improving.

The London dockers had their headquarters in the Millwall Road, in what had been a century before a private house. The place was a regular hive—the door was open and men were crawling in and out like bees. Upstairs he found Westerley, the Secretary, who sat at his desk in his shirt sleeves despite the cold, as cool as the weather outside. He made a fine silhouette, Destin thought, as he bent against the telephone receiver, the hand lying on the table warped, as though it had been

broken and set badly . . . "well if you can't hold 'em, let 'em out and be hanged to 'em." There was a note of exultation in his clear, strong voice.

This man had been everything. Circus rider, Sunday-school teacher, foremast hand, stevedore, gold miner, and many other things, including professional boxer—something that had not marred a head and face that might have been taken from a Greek vase. With an old-time hero of the movement, a man named Bent, who had since gone to Australia, he had led many sectional strikes in the nineties, coming in on the crest of the rising labour movement.

"Wildish hasn't turned up yet?" asked Destin.

"No," replied Westerley, hanging up the receiver. "He never does. It is one of Wildish's little ways."

"Creegan sent me a line this morning. The *Twinkler* says your men are coming out."

"*Are* coming out," said Westerley, running his hand through his short curling hair. "They *have* come out. I tell you what it is, Destin, the men don't want leaders any more. They are doing the leading. It is the right spirit. I used to believe Parliament was the shop for labour—but 'pon me God! the more I think of it the more I believe Creegan is on the right tack. You know that Ben 'down under' has come to the same conclusion. Still, there can be no harm in having our men in the Gas House at Westminster to watch the meter."

"Yes," said Destin doubtfully, "but they must have leaders all the same. There must be a head to think."

"That's all right," said the other, "but we've had too many leaders in the past. Let the men lead now for a change.

"This is metaphysics, my boy. It has grown from a glass of whiskey which never existed! Neither

Belch nor Creegan nor I knew anything about it—we can only ride the whirlwind—we can't direct it."

He broke into the old hymn—"He rides the whirlwind and directs the storm," in a full baritone. "Sang it forty years ago when I was a teacher in a New York Methodist Sunday-school."

As they were settling a ring of meetings and going through their list of speakers, Wildish came in, his hat a little on one side. "Awfully sorry, you chaps, but I've had a frightful lot to do this morning. Been with two old pals from Christchurch, Platonists, who are making things shift down there. What's the row?"

They told him. He treated it all as a huge joke, and even asked them to "come out and have one to lubricate their thinking apparatus." Westerley refused shortly.

When Destin got outside, the papers were fast exhausting their adjectives.

The London railwaymen had come out and the termini were congested. It seemed that the only way to relieve the congestion, according to the *Kensington*, which was fast losing its temper, was "a dose of ball," as though the termini were a horse with an obstruction. Trains were getting away sometimes, sometimes not, whilst the suspension of the London suburban service was gritting the middle classes into apoplexy.

As the days went on the news grew worse. The papers were by now speechless, having exhausted their poster vocabulary, and had returned to the simple statement. "MINERS COME OUT," was all the *Twinkler* could say.

This, according to the *Kensington*, was the crowning infamy of labour. "It was not cricket." To take advantage of the Christmas season, when millions of poor people needed fire and light was disgusting.

The miners, it appeared, had never been satisfied with the working of their Rates agreement, and were now raising the devil over some mythical "difficult places," from which the coal was difficult—or at least *they* said it was difficult—to "win," language which the-man-in-the-street regarded as sheer obtuseness and perversity invented for the occasion, and left it there.

As the *Meteor* said in a fine peroration—"if a hard-working clerk, trying to keep himself and his family respectable upon thirty shillings a week, talked of 'difficult places' when his ledger was more troublesome than usual, what would his employer say?" and stopped there appalled at the vision it had conjured up.

As for the Direct Actionists, Destin and Wildish had addressed some big meetings at the docks, and had been considerably titillated to see their names in the *Owl*.

But Creegan and Belch were the presiding genii of the new revolution. Creegan in particular was ubiquitous. One day in the North stirring up the railwaymen, the next at a London dockers' meeting, and the following day in South Wales, setting the brand to the combustible matter of the Welsh miners who were the mainspring of the new miners' move. But Belch surpassed himself, talking a great deal to sundry newspaper correspondents it is true, but showing once more his gift of organisation. The *Worker* by now was putting his name in capitals, an unusual thing for them, even though he were a member of the Parliamentary Party.

Even the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire miners, with the old Liberal tradition still clinging to them raggedly, felt themselves swept into the vortex of revolution, and were ceasing work. This mælström was gathering force day by day. It was as though it had

solved the secret of perpetual motion and whirled faster and faster from its own innate velocity. The orthodox Labour members, even, were forced to come down from the fence where they had been sitting and go with the swim or lose their grip on the Unions.

So far, the Law had kept the strong arm in abeyance. There had been a rather ugly pithead struggle in Glamorgan, in which Belch had shown great courage, whilst in Newcastle, the men's pickets had come into collision with the police. The authorities however had not "seen red," despite frantic appeals directly and through the press from the mine owners and railway directors for the upholding of law and order.

The *Olympian* was thunderous with the protests of the aristocracy and the squirearchy, but it was the *Daily Meteor* which in particular was like a den of rattlesnakes, for the middle-class man, upon whom it largely relied for its circulation, not unnaturally, finding himself fireless, trainless, and rapidly becoming foodless, "and not," as one gentleman expressed it, "being exactly a blessed spirit," set himself on end and rattled.

Vainly, at the beginning, the Workers' Party leaders in Parliament tried to hold back the men. Steltham in particular did effective work here in his widely quoted Kellerton speech, in which he said—"The British working-man is on his trial. Victories are not won by ill-considered action and the throwing over of leaders. Let the British worker prove that he is not a mere sentimentalist, but one of the hardest-headed men in Europe —not swayed by the breath of faction or the lure of direct action."

However that might be, the British working-man, who seemed to have been developing quite a Gallic impetuousness during the previous ten years—a phenomenon

which one or two writers—who had been laughed at for their pains had noticed—was nibbling at the Syndicalist lure. The men had the bit in their teeth, "and you couldn't stop 'em unless you tore the teeth out of them, and you can't bite without teeth," Creegan said, and Creegan knew.

The National Workers' Freedom Society, called by the strikers "the Society of 'Scabs,'" the name given to the strikebreaker despite the ruling in the Courts that such terms constituted libel, supplied "free labourers" to Capital. These aristocrats of unskilled labour had the time of their lives, running waggons off the metals or into one another, wrecking engine rooms (all in good faith), keeping down the water in the mines (sometimes), and living on the fat of the land. After a time, and in strange contradiction to the earlier announcements that Capital "had all and more men than it wanted," it seemed that the newcomers were likely to prove *un embarras de richesses* and were being got rid of as quickly as possible.

It was when the latter stage had been reached and after the Shipping Trust found its steamers either languishing under heavy cargoes which could not be discharged, or lying in port lighthanded and lightheaded, that Sir James Buckley, the genial Board of Trade arbitrator, suggested an informal conference between masters and men.

At a meeting of the men's leaders to consider the offer, Creegan laughed at it and talked about "bilkers." Westerley followed suit and declared that "By Jupiter! we've got their tails down and if they want to meet us they must reinstate Bingley" (that was the goods driver) "and concede the full demands of the transport workers and the miners."

Steltham wasn't so sure. This in his opinion was the

psychological moment for treating. Later, with depleted war chests, the men would not be in anything like so good a position to bargain. And he knew that many of the Radicals were with the men now, whereas did they perversely prolong the struggle, they would lose their friends on the floor of the House.

The argument ranged backwards and forwards in the Strike Executive, Belch being, for him, strangely silent. "What do you say, Belch?" asked Creegan.

Belch began to speak in short, quick, stuttering sentences, gathering fluency as he went on.

He pointed out that the miners had lost already nearly £12,000,000 in wages and strike pay; that the dockers, living as they did upon something under an average of £1 a week, had saved nothing and were living God alone knew how. He had been down in Glamorgan and had witnessed scenes of desperate hardship. The little children whose boots had been pawned were running about barefoot in the snow—the houses lacked food and were coalless. "They are looking each morning at tens of thousands of tons of the stuff they've slaved for and they can't touch a grain of it. That alone will drive them back before long. Anyhow, let us thrash it out over the arbitration table—we may beat the devils, and we can always back out if we wish."

Creegan was scowling, but Belch, whose voice had now risen to a bellow and whose blue eyes were set vaguely above the head of the chairman, Steltham, pictured such a tale of hardship that the miners' representatives on the executive came to his way of thinking, and a decision to meet the masters was carried by two.

The evening papers were filled with olive branches, excepting the implacable *Kensington*, which declared that arbitration upon such a matter was a scandal. "Let

the men go back to work and leave the whole thing in the hands of the masters," which, as the *Meteor*, which sometimes had a burst into pro-labourism, said, was archaic and only worthy of papers which hadn't their fingers on the pulse of labour. The *Meteor* had just bitten the *Kensington's* circulation in two and was naturally critical.

VIII

MASTERS AND MEN

WHEN Destin walked down the incline to the Great North-Western terminus, in the offices of which colliery proprietors, railway magnates, and shipowners were to meet the men's leaders, it was like walking into a graveyard. Across the vacant stretch of platforms there was but a single trickle of thin white steam. The busiest terminus in Europe was empty.

A uniformed attendant took him and his papers up in a noiseless lift. Another ushered him, as though he had been a railway magnate himself, into a noiseless Board-room on the first stage.

It was a dark, mahogany-toned room, with crimson leather table in the centre and crimson chairs. Around the walls hung the fathers of the Great North-Western in oils, whilst at the top, behind the carved chair, crouched a Chinese joss, leering down the room.

He was there as a sort of secretary to Creegan, and was arranging his papers, when two of the miners came through the door. Their gaze travelled reverentially around the room, until it rested on the joss. "Bowing down to their idols in wood and stone, Bill!" whispered one to the other behind his hand as though he were in church. The other laughed vaguely—"Ay-ay, lad."

Westerley came in as cool as an iceberg, with Steltham behind him, who smiled darkly as he shook hands. Then McGraw, his briar in full blast, with a tartan around his neck.

When all the men's chiefs had arrived save Belch and Creegan, Sir James blew in through the door in the bluff way he had, his flowing side-whiskers moist with cold.

He went up to Steltham and shook him cordially by the hand, afterwards taking each man's hand in a close, intimate way. He always did it as though he knew everything about the man. . . . "Have met you before, my dear fellow—sure of it—can't remember where at the moment." He was generally right, for his bluff, clean face, side-whiskers, and *pince-nez*, were known at every arbitration table in Britain.

Then a different kind of bird. Sir Crespigny Cathcart, called by the Radicals "Dodo" Cathcart, in reference to the almost extinct set of opinions which, as a Tory of the old school, he championed both inside and outside the House of Commons, was a distinguished-looking man, his hair, like hoar frost, making a picturesque crown for his fresh, clean-shaven face and coal black eyebrows. His eye was glazed by a monocle, rimless and black-ribboned; his hat, a black of ebony, he carried in his hand, and a blue Melton, that was a sort of blue skin, covered his long back. A pretty picture of a man, though a frosty one. He took a seat at the table with the curtest of nods to the others.

Three or four from the men's executives, rugged-looking fellows, whose rounded shoulder and short, thickened arms told the story of hewing and lifting, came in at intervals. They looked stiffly uncomfortable in their suits of good broadcloth and clean dickeys.

Each man took his seat close against his fellows as though he were in church, and looked as though he didn't quite know what to do with his hands. But Westerley, Steltham, and McGraw, each in his own way, showed themselves at home—Westerley perhaps a little

too much so, as he pulled out and lit a strong black cigar, which he puffed upwards nonchalantly into space as he sat back in his chair.

McGraw was talking to Sir James in low, gruff accents, the arbitrator listening with serious interest. Steltham was making notes on the sheet of foolscap before him.

A couple of colliery proprietors and a shipowner, all plain if rather hard-looking men of affairs, had entered and added themselves to the bunch of precisely dressed men who were listening to a funny story being told by an earlier arrival, Sir Gilbert Goring, one of the chiefs of the Shipping Trust. Destin could see the round, inflamed head topping the group, with the network of bluish veins cris-crossing the temples and running up into the hairless skull, as it threw itself back in hoarse humour; the great clean-shaven mouth opening cavernously in a high laugh to show the strong, yellow horse-teeth. Over the high white collar that forced the head off the lumpy shoulders, there ran a deep lip of crimson flesh which folded above into the scanty hair on the nape of the neck. The voice roared upwards, impregnating the air with the smell of brandy.

Sitting at the table, reading the Liberal daily, the *Monitor*, his back slightly turned upon the group, sat a rather delicate, refined-looking man, his grey frock coat caught slenderly by a silken catch at the waist. His grey eyes were slightly knitted. Everything about this man was in place, Destin noting the tie of dark green silk with the Mexican fire opal in it, his neat glazed double collar, and the exquisitely fitting clothes.

Afterwards he learned that he was Mr. Ellerton Muschamp, philanthropist and colliery owner, who was distinguished by an incredible meanness to his employees and an unfathomable purse for charity.

Muschamp had founded half a dozen homes for lost girls and was a professing Christian, being laughed at behind his back by his fellows for his pains as a "Methody." But they all respected one of the most acute business brains in England.

Sir James came slowly to the head of the table, balancing his gold glasses in his hand and smiling largely around him. "I think, gentlemen, we might start. It has gone ten, and you know my motto—I believe in punctuality. I am afraid we shall have to begin without Mr. Creegan and Mr. Goldbeater."

"I don't think you will, Sir James," said a voice near the door. Nobody had seen the man entering who had spoken.

At first sight there was something intolerably commonplace about Richard Goldbeater, K.C., M.P., and railway director. He looked the average man—so much so that witnesses in the law courts told him all sorts of things in the box as one man would tell something to another—for everyone likes the average man.

He was of average height. His sweeping morning coat, which enveloped his comfortable average corporation, though beautifully cut, was an average coat. His collar and his tie were the kind of collar and tie which can never be recalled afterwards. The silk hat which he held in his hand was an average hat, well polished. Only his boots, which were long and slender and square-toed, were noticeable—perhaps because he always got his boots in Paris.

The head, round and porcine, was an average head, the features nondescript, from the short rather irregular nose to the jaw. The eyes might have been of any colour.

Then he smiled, as he came to the table, and the whole man had changed.

The eyes had sunk almost out of sight in the heavy cheek-folds, slanting either side in his head. The mouth had closed and also disappeared. Even the tiny ears had become invisible. But the jaw, till now unnoticeable, had broadened like that of a constrictor in the act of deglutition.

Destin felt that he had seen this man before, and recently. He turned instinctively to the Chinese joss. The man coming to the table *was* the joss. There was something porcine, but sleuthy about him. Something that to him at least was utterly un-moral. Something that appalled him, as Damascene had appalled him—only that he was frightened too.

The little plump white hand went out quickly to Sir James. The figure turned like a globe, bent across the table as far as it could and shook Steltham's hand with courteous warmth—"Glad to meet you again, Mr. Steltham." Then to the other men on Steltham's side of the table, to whom he bowed collectively but individually—with a bland "Good morning, gentlemen." To Goring and the others he nodded. There was a vacant chair at the head of the table next to Muschamp. He slipped into it as though it had been greased.

The others came up to the table still laughing at Goring's story. Munschamp peered through his *pince-nez* around the table, and said—"As I am sure neither side wishes to take an unfair advantage of the other, I propose Sir James Bulkley as Chairman." Sir James took the raised chair at the head of the table.

As he was sitting down, Creegan came in, the points of his flanel collar caught closely under his tie by a thin bar of Connemara marble. He nodded curtly to his own men and sat down in the last chair on the men's side of the table, putting his sweeping, conical hat, with the deep cleft, on the table before him.

"We are just starting, Creegan," said Belch amicably

and a little nervously. Belch had slipped into his place the moment before.

"Who's the chairman?" said Creegan.

"Sir James Bulkley, the arbitrator, of course, Mr. Creegan," smiled Goldbeater. "You weren't thinking of taking the chair yourself, were you?" He smiled sweetly.

Creegan's face was suffused. "I object," he said shortly.

"But, my dear Mr. Creegan, Sir James is the arbitrator." There was immense patronage in Goldbeater's voice.

"I won't have one of the master-class in the chair," said Creegan sullenly.

"*You* won't. *You* won't. But, my dear Mr. Creegan, there are others besides you to be considered." Again he smiled.

"I object," repeated Creegan doggedly. The men by his side looked shocked, especially the miners, whilst Steltham said—"Mr. Creegan, I fear, has little knowledge of arbitration boards. Surely he must know that an arbitrator belongs to no class, representing as he does the rights of all classes."

"Never mind what knowledge I have, or haven't, Steltham," said Creegan, scowling. Goldbeater smiled indulgently. Goring looked apoplectic. The others politely deaf.

"If my election is not unanimous, I will have nothing further to do with the proceedings," said Sir James quietly. "If you think I am not honest enough to hold the chair impartially, Mr. Creegan, I am sorry, but I can go."

Creegan was silent. He looked like a sulky boy. But he scowled something which might have been acquiescence or dissent.

"As there now appears to be no further objection,

Sir James," said Goldbeater, who had been watching Steltham fingering his notes, "I propose that we get to business. I have jotted down here a few rough notes for an agenda to save time. I think the gentlemen present will find it covers the points at issue fairly."

The chairman took the paper, which was typed, and after glancing it over said—"I think it puts the points fairly. But I will read them out :

"1. Whether drunkenness of engine drivers off duty is a matter of public safety and therefore of reinstatement.

"2. Wages and hours of the dockers.

"3. The general conditions of the railwaymen.

"4. Prices for 'difficult places' for miners.

"5. Whether a further increase should be granted in view of the fact that wages on the average have risen twenty per cent. within the last ten years."

Steltham said that he also had jotted down a few rough notes, and looked a little upset when Bulkley suggested that unless they brought in other issues, they had better confine themselves to the agenda before him.

Steltham replied quietly and courteously—"I am afraid I shall have to follow my friend Mr. Creegan and say 'I object.'"

"But surely those are the points at issue, Mr. Steltham?"

"They may be, but I think they might be put differently."

"How would you state them?"

"This is not a question of Bingley. It is a question purely of wages and hours."

"Bingley's the red herring," said Creegan coarsely.

"I don't think we need cry 'stinking fish' yet a bit," said Mr. Muschamp. "I for one am quite willing to make it a question more or less of wages and hours."

"Good God! Muschamp—what are you saying?"

burst out Goring. "You know we settled all that long . . ." He broke off. Muschamp was looking at him serenely.

"Oh! is that it, gentlemen?" inserted Steltham. "You had the whole thing cut and dry before you came in."

"Dash it all, Steltham!" interposed Belch, indignantly, "I suppose they have as much right to meet as we."

Creegan looked at him.

Goring was apoplectic again. As Belch had said, they had as much right to meet as anyone else, but everyone, including the arbitrator, looked as though they had been children caught stealing apples. Even Cathcart held himself a little more rigidly in his chair.

The two miners who had come in first and Manby, who was one of the railwaymen's representatives, stared at the chairman, bewildered.

"What is the trouble?" asked Manby. "For my part, I think Mr. Belch has put it about right."

"Very well, gentlemen, if you are agreed, I suggest that for the moment we hold the agenda over," said Sir James.

"First blood!" said Steltham under his breath.

"We had better start with an informal, friendly discussion so as to get roughly at the points at issue, with a statement of the case from each side. Who will open?"

"I am sure I am speaking for my colleagues when I say that the advantage of first speaking should lie with the gentlemen on the other side of the table." Goldbeater was exquisitely polite.

"Good! good! Goldbeater knows his business," said one of the shipowners to his neighbour.

But to the surprise of some of his colleagues, Steltham would not have it. "I do not wish Labour to be

behindhand in the courtesies of life. Let one of you gentlemen speak first."

To Destin, watching, it seemed that out of the bunch of men there, the two men that mattered were Steltham and Goldbeater—with perhaps Creegan in the background, but remote. They were saluting before making play with the rapiers of argument. Nor could he help noticing how ill at ease some of the labour men looked. They moved uncomfortably in their chairs. Before the urbanity of the Masters they showed up badly.

"I suggest, gentlemen, to save time, that Labour speaks first, as it first took the offensive," said the chairman.

To this Steltham had no reply. So he got to his feet, his face more craggy than ever, the smile darkening in his eyes. He commenced in even tones:

"I am perfectly sure, and my colleagues are perfectly sure, that the gentlemen on the other side of the table have met us in the honest determination to find a way out of the dreadful *impasse* in which we find ourselves, and indeed to do justice to Labour's claims if those claims can be substantiated." It was Steltham's well-know pacifist introduction.

"Speak for yourself," growled Creegan.

"Of course I except Mr. Creegan," said Steltham, the smile darkening again in his eyes. "Mr. Creegan is always the exception."

A little smile ran from face to face amongst the Masters. It flickered a moment and went out. Steltham had seen it, and he gripped the lapels of his coat tightly.

"But I should be sorry," he went on, "if there were any misapprehension on this matter. Mr. Creegan and I stand side by side in this fight—stand for a common object." The words were addressed to the chairman, but the glance went out to Goldbeater, who, however,

was smiling to his neighbour as though he were not listening.

In a statement, in which there was not a superfluous word, in which each fact dovetailed into its predecessor, Steltham outlined dispassionately the position of the three principal unions involved. "Over one million and a half of men out . . ." "industry paralysed . . ." "the dreadful threat of the future."

The words came evenly and coldly, but, as he passed from the statement of the position of the individual unions and the question of wages and hours involved, to the growing federation of these unions, showing how resistlessly the work of federation went on day and night, his statement took a higher note. It was still smooth and resistless as a flowing tide, but underneath, it held the rumble and threat of the flood to come. . . . "Yesterday it was the individual union battling for life against the overwhelming power of capital. To-day it is the linking up of inter-dependent trades, as we have federated the Miners, the Railwaymen, and the Dockers for defensive action. To-morrow . . . ?" he stopped. But now the smile had passed from Richard Goldbeater's face—the eyes and ears had emerged again. The men by his side were tense. Goring alone was spluttering and eruptive.

"But it is not the wish of Labour to bring this tremendous engine into action. We hold that matters like the present are for the Conciliation Board and the House of Commons—not for primeval weapons and primeval passions." The voice had become conciliatory once more.

It had sunk, Destin noticed, but there was nothing of the anti-climax about it as he passed on to his final thrust.

"Nor do we wish to destroy the rights of the

Minority by sheer dead weight. We wish to respect minority rights. For no man in this room, and least of all, Mr. Richard Goldbeater, who knows the position intimately, as he showed in his recent evidence before the Royal Commission upon Labour Unrest, will deny that Demos holds the last word. When everything is said and done, Demos the voter can outvote Capital the voter at the polls. If the present Government wish to invite certain disaster" (here he looked stedfastly at Goldbeater and Muschamp) "they will refuse to consider the claims of labour. It is literally true that the fate of the Government, which, after all, in the greater sense, as a Capitalist Government, has the interests of both Liberal and Conservative in its hands, lies with the gentlemen on the other side of the table. The General Election is not far off—the reply of Demos at that election will hang upon the results of the present conference. I make no threats; I am simply pointing out the logical sequence of cause and effect."

Creegan sat hunched over the table, driving deep holes into the sheet of blotting paper before him with a pencil. Muschamp was writing rapidly. Cathcart sat looking stiffly before him like an aristocratic mummy. Goldbeater was smiling.

Destin, looking on from where he sat at the end of the table taking a shorthand *précis* of Steltham's argument, felt that it was what he called "a watertight case." He could not conceive any effective reply. But he was indignant at the studious restraint of the speaker—at what Creegan would call "truckling to the priests of Baal," whilst the blank unresponsiveness of Cathcart, the stolidity of the masters, excepting Goring, whose face had grown more threatening from minute to minute, and beyond all else the sleepy smile of Goldbeater, unnerved him.

Put it to himself how he would, there was an air of sureness, of command—call it tradition, or heredity, or what you would—which conjured up to him a dead wall impossible of climbing over or battering down. For a moment, as he glanced at Creegan, driving deeply into the blotting paper, he faltered in doubt even of his own beloved direct action.

Goldbeater seemed in no hurry to reply. He sat there smiling sleepily and probing his teeth through his closed lips with a gold tortoise-shell toothpick. Yet everybody was looking at him. It was not boastfulness—it was certainty—that sureness which in the prize ring as in the strike Creegan had always said was half the battle.

Sir James was asking for a representative of Capital to reply. Muschamp was nodding to Goldbeater, who at last rose to his feet.

"It seems that I am expected to reply," he said. "Yet, if Mr. Steltham will let me say so, I don't think there is anything to reply to, for the argument we have heard was to a certain extent partly a statement of facts, which I for one should not attempt to challenge, partly baseless assumption, partly rhetoric, and partly, I am sorry to say, a threat, despite the final repudiation. There is, however, a happy augury in its moderation of tone, though not of statement, for the result of our deliberations.

"Let me reciprocate from this side of the table Mr. Steltham's opening statement about our honest wish to find a way out; but, whilst reciprocating it fully, let me also say that it is not the Masters who have to find a way out, but the Men.

"It is peculiarly unpleasant for my colleagues to have to point to inexorable circumstance, but it is not we who have created the present situation, by locking out the men, but the men who have come out.

"What are the facts? I noticed that Mr. Steltham most carefully abstained from stating the origin of the present strike.

"An engine driver is found drunk off duty and is suspended. It may be claimed, as he does claim, that when a man is off duty he can do what he likes with his time—but is it so? Is it not the merest sophistry to say so? The companies are responsible for the safety of the public, of whom, in common with their employees, they are the servants. The man who gets drunk off duty is likely to get drunk on duty, or to go drunk to his duty. That means murder on the railways. To back such a strike, call it 'sympathetic' or what you will, is to preach murder indirectly, but none the less—murder.

"Again, however distasteful it may be, let us deal with inexorable fact—for it is fact, and not sentiment, that will, I believe, kill the 'sympathetic' strike.

"Mr. Steltham has spoken of the strength of the position of the three unions involved—of their unlimited war-chests—of their unity. I fear that Mr. Steltham is not so sure of his facts as we are of ours. There are not over a million and a half of men out, but, at the end of last week, a little over one million two hundred thousand. (Will he kindly note the figures as the information may prove useful.)" The speaker was smiling blandly. "Then, so far as the war-chests are concerned, the less said the better.

"If he would like me to give him the figures, I shall be happy to do so, but it is sufficient here to say that during the last series of strikes the Miners alone lost twelve million pounds in wages and out of work pay, the Dockers were decimated, whilst the Railwaymen I fancy are not anxious for a prolonged trial of strength." He glanced along the men whom

he addressed. Some of them moved uneasily in their seats, but Westerley threw back his head and laughed.

"I see that Mr. Westerley doubts my figures. He doubts them though he well knows that in the balance sheet he took out last week for his executive, it showed that his Union had in hand something under twenty thousand pounds." Westerley had stopped laughing.

"But enough of that. Let me come to the non-combatants, who in this class-war—I use Mr. Creegan's favourite term"—Goldbeater was smiling again—"as in all other wars, are the chief sufferers. Frankly," and his face grew serious again, "we don't like the misery to which this impossible strike is subjecting the women and children. But if the struggle turns upon what I may term the 'war-chest,' as it does, and it is Mr. Steltham, not I, who has introduced this issue, I think my friend, if he will let me call him so, my friend, Mr. Steltham, will see with the sanity which has always distinguished him, which side can hold out the longer. Because the coldest winter for many years is with us—the children are crying for bread—the women for those comforts which can make life liveable.

"But to get this bread and those comforts, the men must have work. We alone, I fear, can give them that work. However unpleasant or grotesque it may seem to my friends on the other side of the table, we own the land and the machinery. Our society of to-day is founded on the principle of private property. These are facts.

"Now I am not going to make any threats. I don't believe in threats; but again, what are the facts? Mr. Steltham has alluded to the gradual linking up of the men's unions into national federation by trade, and of individual trades where they are inter-

dependent, foreshadowing the day when in Great Britain there will be but one union—in his own words, 'a tremendous engine of warfare.'

"Pending the time when the creation of such anti-social weapons may be dealt with as menaces to society—and I am glad he has so plainly laid his cards on the arbitration table, for it opens our eyes to the creation of a tyranny which we never suspected" (he was speaking reprovingly as a father might speak to a naughty child)—"might I ask him whether he knows anything of the Unions of Masters and *their* federation?

"Let us get the facts again." (Here once more was that passion for facts which Destin found dominated this conference as it dominated everything else.)

"There are to-day in Great Britain between one and two thousand Unions of Masters, and they outnumber those of the Men.

"He speaks of giant federations. What of our federations? Let me take one as an example of the rest.

"The shipbuilders are to-day federated into the Shipping Trust, which in Great Britain holds in its hands tens of thousands of lives and hundreds of thousands of tons of shipping—and, to go outside Britain, internationally, holds millions of lives and millions of tons of shipping. The coal owners and many other interests are federated in the same way. It is regrettable, but federation begets federation—force begets force. It is Labour which has appealed to force. It is Labour which has thrown down the gauntlet—not we.

"And this word 'force' brings me to one of Mr. Steltham's threats, the main argument of Mr. Steltham, which was from beginning to end an appeal to force. He realised the very unpleasant fact that all argument ultimately rests on force." ("That's it," said Goring

deeply.) "We have the ballot to avoid the bullet—Parliament and the arbitration table to save the barricade and the noose. If we Masters were the tyrants we are represented to be, we should not trouble the arbitration table and the law courts—we should call into action the forces behind Society.

"But all that has been unwillingly dragged from me and is only given in refutation of some of Mr. Steltham's assumptions.

"The gentleman who preceded me has shown a very nice consideration for the Government. I for one was under the impression that he was an enemy of the Government, though I have always noticed when it comes to the pinch, he and his party usually support us in the division lobby. However that may be, I congratulate him upon his perspicacity in what I take to be his foreseeing of the time when there will possibly be no longer the Liberal, the Tory, and the Workers' Parties, but only two—the Socialist and the anti-Socialist. (Something incidentally which throws a new light upon his wish to protect the Liberal Government, for the throwing out of that Government would expedite the very combination he fears.) When that combination comes, and it has already been foreshadowed at the great Magog meeting in the spring of this year, then we shall be able to deal with militant Trades Unionism as it should be dealt with. Like Mr. Steltham, I make no threats; I am only pointing out the logical sequence of cause and effect."

And Goldbeater sat down, still with that gentle suavity.

Destin's pen, taking down the gist of the speech, stopped. The room had grown unbearably close. He felt a sense of strangulation. Creegan below him clutched at his throat as though he too were struggling to breathe. "Direct Action." "Direct Action." The

words danced on the sheet before him. They looked ridiculous.

The discussion was carried on by the two miners and a couple of colliery owners in amicable fashion. The tension that had followed Goldbeater was yielding. It seemed as though the whole dispute could be arranged there and then, and when Muschamp followed with a sort of *nunc dimittis*, in which he said pontifically —"The Great Arbiter has seen fit to deliver the keys of Society into our hands. We take them as a trust. We recognise our duties to Labour, and we only ask that in return Labour shall recognise its duties not only to itself but to Society"—he felt that the whole matter was as good as settled. The miners were obviously impressed.

Destin recognised in him as in Courcy that same steadfast belief in the divine right of Capital: his honest regret at the unavoidable misery of the strike. It was Benevolent Bureaucracy speaking to its erring children. But behind it also, the same implacability—the same sureness of purpose—the spirit that shrinks at nothing necessary to the fulfilment of that purpose.

Bulkley alone looked from face to face with apprehension. The Sabbath evening in heaven calm did not appear to impress him.

Through all this, Sir Gilbert Goring had been shuffling his feet. Several times he had tried to speak, but always Muschamp or Goldbeater whispered to him or passed him a twist of paper. Now, as Muschamp sat down, he erupted at his side.

Bulkley was looking hard at him, his brows slightly knitted. Muschamp was speaking upwards to him. Even Goldbeater was frowning a little.

The voice was thin and high like steam overdriven through a tiny escape pipe. Inarticulate at first, it gathered strength.

He rambled for a few sentences in an endeavour to keep within the conventions. He was clawing the air for the right words. Then they came torrentially.

"Let us have no nonsense about this matter. Let us talk as business men to the point. Let us say what we mean." (Goldbeater was frowning at him.) "No, Mr. Goldbeater, this is my horse and I'm going to ride him.

"What is this strike? It is a strike for the right to get drunk. Nothing more. All this talk about wages and hours is humbug. All this talk about starving women and children is humbug—dishonest humbug. It is not we who are on our defence, but Labour. Labour is in the dock.

"Trades Unionism has been growing year by year—growing into a hydra-headed monster which devours everything before it. Lop one head—and another grows in its place. The time has come to call 'halt!' First, it was improved conditions. Then reduction of hours. Then increase of wages.

"Not satisfied with fighting the employers on the industrial field, it has now entered the political. Nobody knows where it will stop. But it has got to stop right there.

"Threats! Who talks of threats?" (He swung round, looking squarely first at Steltham and then Creegan.) "Argument! Who talks of argument?" The veins were swelling in his head. His neck, empurpled, was lapping his white collar.

"There is only one argument. Force. There is only one threat that is effective. Force.

"It is not Labour that shall decide its hours and wages—it is WE. It is not Labour that shall set the pace—it is WE. We are in the saddle, and by God! we shall ride the horse.

"We own the means of life, as Mr. Creegan has it

in his jargon. We have behind us the triple engines of the State—the army, navy and police. Who controls those three engines? Is it the Unions? Pah!

"When we give the word, we shall settle this matter in our own way. We shall settle it—not at the arbitration table—but at the barricade and with the firing platoon.

"You talk of capturing the political machine. What does the political machine rest on? Force. What lies behind Westminster? The bayonets of the British Army. And by God!" (he struck the table passionately) "by God! we are going to use them."

He sat down abruptly, the veins knotted in his temples—the face and neck suffused—one great hairy claw clenched before him on the table. There was something cavernous about the man, something elemental.

The silence fell over the table like a shroud. Goldbeater had ceased to smile. Muschamp looked irritated and disgusted. The miners had a shocked, childish astonishment. Belch seemed depressed, almost cowed. Only Steltham smiled and bent over his papers.

Goldbeater rose, angry lights in his eyes. "I think it only fair to myself and my colleagues to say that we entirely dissent from Sir Gilbert Goring's remarks, which seem to us unfortunate." He sat down again.

But there was one man there who was neither irritated nor cowed. As Destin looked down the table, he saw the long keen nose, the grey-blue eyes, staring at Goring. Behind the eyes there was a quiet, savage triumph.

Creegan was on his feet. The graceful pillar of a man whose height, alone in that room, held him

squarely to that of Goring, looked the natural corrective of the other—the ascetic, fanatical face, pallid now, a thin sweat on the forehead.

If Steltham had in his mind the thought to stop Creegan, it passed from him as quickly as it came. Creegan would not be stopped. He, too, was elemental.

"Thank God Almighty for Sir Gilbert Goring." It was a curious beginning. Creegan stared at his man as he said it.

"Thank God Almighty for Sir Gilbert Goring!" The sentence came again like the beat of a hammer. "Let us always meet the mailed fist rather than the velvet glove. Sir Gilbert has no mask. Now we know where we stand.

"Whilst you gentlemen"—he sneered along the line of his fellows—"have been talking about politics, the gentlemen opposite have been forging guns. Whilst you palavered, they prepared. It is the vindication of direct action."

He turned to his colleagues. "What is your answer going to be? Are ye going to be after talking pretty nothingness to the other gentlemen? Are ye going to talk about voting yourselves into power? Are ye going to boast of your big vote battalions, when you know, full well, in the heart of ye, that half your army are Liberal asses in Socialist skins? Are ye going to Westminster cap in hand to ask the Masters for the love of God to let you rule by the ballot, when *they* mean to rule by the bullet?

"Can ye doubt it? There is one man, besides Sir Gilbert, who has no doubt anyhow. Mr. Goldbeater. Whilst Mr. Steltham, who may know something of arbitration tables, but nothing of the facts behind them, has been fluttering his ballot paper in the face of Capital, Capital has held the Big Stick over his head, ready to knock out his brains and the brains

of the ballot for which he stands. Of course, Mr. Steltham's speech was a threat—but what a threat! My God!

"Let us tear away the mask. Take away the smile from Mr. Goldbeater's face, and what lies behind? Sheer, brute force. He says—'Spend your years getting the ballot, and when you've got it, use it . . . if you're able.' The Big Stick.

"Where they can't bluff us, they'll bludgeon us. Where they can't chloroform us in the Courts—the judge to-day is the surgeon for capital—they'll use the stick. Every man here knows that the decisions of the Courts for the past five years have tied us hand and foot. The judge is above the law—above Parliament itself. No one of us knows what we can or cannot do.

"'The right to get drunk.' Is there a man here who doesn't know that there isn't a man on the other side of the table but claims the right to get drunk how and when he likes. Is there a man here that doesn't know that, rather than lose the strike, the gentlemen opposite, for all their fine talk about the women and children, would send them to hell? Do you think that the men who have their spies honeycombing our Unions, who can give us our balance sheets better than we can do it ourselves, will stop at such a trifle as the murder of women—always allowing that it is murder in uniform?

"And if our peacemakers like Mr. Steltham want any other proof, they have it in the fact that every word used by the previous speakers showed that Capitalism is in the saddle and that Capitalism means to ride the horse. It is for that they are putting the strangle-hold on the Unions—it is for that the employers' federation chain is being forged—it is for that they hold in the background the noiseless steel

and the bullet—'the noose and the barricade' as Mr. Goldbeater put it.

"If any doubt could have been left, it was removed by Sir Gilbert Goring. He stands for that gospel of force which every man on the other side of the table backs either consciously or unconsciously. Sir Gilbert believes, like Nietszche, that there are but two classes—the Master and the Slave—and with him he believes that one has the divine right—the other, no rights. Mr. Muschamp in his way believes the same thing. Will ye tell me where is the need of talking?

"That means one thing—the return of Man to the abyss from which he has crawled during the ages. That means that this matter is to be settled by force, and by force alone. That means we must meet force by force and not by talk if civilisation itself is to be saved.

"It is, I say, the vindication of 'direct action.'

"This is no question of wages and hours—of a man being drunk or not being drunk. It means something deep—ineradicable. Something that the ages have seen—the battle between right and might—between light and darkness—between two opposing forces—two policies which Heaven itself cannot reconcile. What the slave fought for under the Roman emperors—what the revolt of the serf meant—this new revolt under capitalism means also. Let's cut the cackle and get to business. Let's look this bloody thing in the maw.

"Labour has flung down the gauntlet to Society. Society is taking it up. And for what has it flung down the gauntlet?

"It has thrown it down for the prostitute and the man clogged to the earth—for the oppression of race by race and of colour by colour—it has thrown it down to declare that the White shall not oppress the

Black and the Yellow, that in the biggest and best sense all men are equal. It is throwing it down not only for the sweated matchbox-maker in the east of London, but for the sweated peasant in India. It is a gauntlet flung down, not by men of the White Races only, but by their brothers of the Yellow Races in China and Japan and by the Brown Man in India. It is an Armageddon—in which the fight is to the finish.

"Sir Gilbert Goring and his kind are prepared to drench Britain in blood to win this strike. I go farther. We are prepared to drench the world. He is prepared to set brother against brother—we are prepared to go farther—to set child against mother—the coming generation against the present. If there is to be a blood-drench—let it come and quickly.

"'Right to get drunk.' 'Difficult places.' 'Wages and hours.'

"Something deeper far. Something that neither time nor perhaps eternity can efface—a chasm that cannot be bridged—the battle of two opposing principles—of an intensity of hate which has no counterpart on the earth—of night and darkness—of heaven and hell."

In the days that followed, through the ebb and flow of argument—through Belch's strange silences—Destin could hear those words—"the battle of principles . . ." "an intensity of hate that has no counterpart on earth . . ." "of night and darkness, of heaven and hell." He at least felt that Creegan was right—there were chasms that could not be bridged—"heaven and hell"—"heaven and hell."

IX

IRON AND VELVET

THE days passed into weeks. The arbitration meeting had broken up temporarily, finding agreement impossible, though Sir James Bulkley, with delicate tactfulness, had prevented a final breach. In the meantime, both sides were putting out all their strength. The Masters had even persuaded the authorities to call out the military in the north and in the South Wales coal districts, but they had not been used, though the police were everywhere working the baton and some hundreds of men had been mauled.

Creegan was now in supreme control of the strike. Belch was said to be ill. Destin was everywhere with his chief, and had addressed, together with Wildish, a ring of mass meetings in the north, one day speaking in the slush at the "bank" of a coal pit—another in a barn of a hall. He was becoming more restrained, for he began to feel for the first time in the movement the weight of responsibility, a feeling which strained whilst it flattered, for it meant shutting off steam. Wildish, in fact, scoffed at his lack of what he called "go."

The Big Stick at the Great North-Western was still in his mind. He could feel that the Masters held something in leash, waiting for the time to unslip it.

The men were showing unexpected powers of resistance despite the lowness of their war-chests. In those districts where the coal companies were their land-

lords and had turned them out into the winter, they simply went to their more fortunate fellows and slept two and three in a bed. When the out-of-work pay had dribbled down to a dole, they took another hole in their belts and shut their ears to the wailing of the hungry children. "Another Hole in the Belt," in fact, became first a headline in the labour papers and was then taken up half-mockingly by the general press.

The employers had used starvation and the streets to beat the men. Destin wondered what they would use next, and asked Creegan what he thought, in Bexham, the colliery town where they had been speaking.

"Do next, is it?" said Creegan. "Sure that's not hard to see. They'll use the cold steel next. That's what they'll do."

Creegan was right. There had been some movements of troops in the morning to protect with the police the pit-head of the Black Mountain colliery, where the manager, a sandy-headed Londoner who had made himself generally unpleasant, did the work of three men, and with the help of a few dozen "black-legs," kept the water from rising in the mine and drowning out the machinery. Stones had been thrown and there had been a baton charge or two. Now the khaki of the soldiers browned the pit-head as Creegan and Destin made their way to it in the raw cold of a January morning, the police standing at the side in a compact, black mass, with a few reporters looking thin and cold in their turned-up collars.

When Destin saw the glitter of the bayonets under the angry red light of the January sun, his heart failed him. Creegan pulled his hat tighter on his head and scowled. "The curse of Cain on them!" he said, dropping deeper into the Irish vernacular, as he always

did when excited. "They'll massacree us, will they? Then let them look to it."

Destin tried to dissuade him. "Get our men away from the pit-head, for Heaven's sake, Brian," he urged. Creegan made no reply but went to a group of strikers and began to talk with them.

Destin was standing away from the crowd on an overturned truck waiting for his crowd. It had been arranged that he was to address a morning meeting. He looked over the bobbing heads of the men and the shawled heads of the women as they clustered round Creegan. There were perhaps a couple of thousand of them and they seemed quiet enough—but not so quiet as the lines of brown men who stood, leaning easily on their spiked rifles. Again there came to his mind the contrast of "Order" and "Disorder" he had seen in the Square that day in June. Here a confused moving mass of people, outnumbering the soldiers ten to one—inchoate and helpless—and up there beyond, the thin brown lines, ready to be swung at the word into fierce effectiveness.

The mass seemed purposeless as it moved uncertainly backwards and forwards, crowding around Creegan, whose head stood out above it. Then something happened. He heard a scuttering behind the truck where he stood, and saw a man scrambling along. When he got to the end of the line of tip-waggons, he stooped, and taking a piece of slate in his hand threw it over the heads of the people into the soldiers.

It seemed to have freed something. The police ran towards the strikers, loosening their batons as they came. In a moment, the crowd had scattered, and the next, pieces of coal and stone were flying thickly through the air. A whistle shrilled and the black wave had wheeled to one side and was doubling back at

the moment when the crowd had instinctively closed up to receive them. There was a movement up there by the pit-head—a word of command, and the brown lines had stiffened to attention.

Another word, and fascinated, he watched the rifles coming machine-like to the shoulders of the men under the angry winter sun. Something ran along them, though for a moment he thought it was the flash of the sun on the steel, a spattering came to his ears—a shouting with higher notes that pierced it—a running hither and thither, and when the crowd had broken there were five or six figures lying on the ground, one of them clutching at its throat.

Creegan alone stood his ground, his hat off, his fists jutting downwards at his side, screaming at the soldiers who lapped at the double led by their officer, a slight-looking boy with a wisp of moustache. The rush passed and he disappeared. The Big Stick was getting to work in earnest.

The impulse came to Destin, strong, overwhelming, to run from the place—the next moment he found himself running forward towards the soldiers, his hands clenched, his lips mouthing incoherences. Something canoned into him and he went down. He was up again, calling to the men and women to rally. He felt himself caught from behind and run helplessly, his arms pinioned, down the pit works and outside.

Maddened, he taunted the police who held him, daring them to bludgeon him. But they only laughed. They evidently had their orders, for they refused to arrest him, and he found himself, an hour afterwards, looking at a leaden face in the glass of the railway waiting room—a new Destin, but unhurt. The Big Stick could discriminate.

The next morning he found his name and Creegan's

side by side in the headlines of the press, in which a highly imaginative account of his battle with the police under the heading—"One Man defies a Regiment," appeared, with an undertone of irony however. During the day he received from his mother, who broke through her six months' silence, a letter of dignified protest at what she called his "proceedings," with two or three telegrams asking him to address meetings to protest against police brutality, and he found, like many before him, that it was an ill wind which blew nobody any good, for the Black Mountain business put him in the forefront as a Syndicalist leader, even the-man-in-the-street beginning to look for the name of Destin as a sort of second Creegan.

But as he opened his *Meteor*, there was something else that struck him between the eyes. The headline—"MR. JOHN BELCH JOINS THE CABINET." In a moment he had run his eye down the details, giving a sketch of the new member's career from the days when, as a working joiner, he had been returned for his district council, down to his making of history as the first working-man to rise to cabinet rank.

The tone of the notice was quite cordial, though near the end there was a little "incident" recorded, as showing a well-known side of his personality (the paper called it "belief in himself"). It was said that upon the Prime Minister advising him of his appointment, he had replied—"And an excellent idea too, Mr. Transome. Now I shall be able to hold the scales between Capital and Labour."

The long silences at the conferences—the stilted, jerky self-assertiveness—all these things were explained now, and when Destin turned to his Labour paper, with the heading—"JUDAS ISCARIOT," with references to "thirty pieces of silver," and "an attempt to undermine independent Labour representation," he

found only one more endorsement of his contempt for politics and politicians. "Belch was like the rest of them"—and he left it there.

He found to his surprise that so far from his Syndicalism killing his journalism, as he feared, the editors of the capitalist papers wanted very much indeed to know his opinion upon men and things. The *Daily Meteor* even asked him to go to the House of Commons and write them a column giving his impressions of the debate upon labour unrest, a debate which was to be one of the "big nights."

It was all part of the mystery of what the man in Bethlehem House had called "the power of the press." It was a thing incomprehensible to the man outside the inner workings—even to a "free lance" like himself, who was beginning "to know the ropes." But it was all helping him in his Fleet Street struggle, and he didn't look gift horses in the mouth even when they came from Capitalism.

He walked through the insignificant side entrance to the House, trying to feel as modest as possible, but could not help a little thrill of pleasure as the two giants at the outside door looked at him and smiled to each other. This lifting from the reek of the average was comforting to him, and as he made his way to the octagonal hall between the lines of seated people, waiting to get into the debate, he could not help glancing a little from side to side to see if those others noticed him, for his large soft green hat, a more modest imitation of Creegan's, had appeared in the *Daily Looking Glass* with other celebrities. But they were quite indifferent. He was beginning to find that London was a big place.

He stood in the hall amongst others, looking about him for a bit, uncertain where he was to present the signed order for admission which the *Daily Meteor*

had so kindly provided, and which bore the signature of a well-known Conservative M.P. Every now and then he saw the double lines extended beyond the wooden railings, which screened the awful presence of the people's law-makers, crane forward as the policeman in the centre called out the name of the member they wished to see in a voice that seemed sacrilegious. Every few minutes, a figure appeared, with the bashfulness of the truly great, behind the announcer, who, standing on one side as the visitor came forward, exposed the legislator to the vulgar gaze. All with one exception, when a well-known voice made itself heard, the man behind the voice pushing the policeman on one side and runnning forward to shake hands with a short, stubbly man, talking all the while, the voice passing into a crescendo, as arm in arm its owner led the short man to some sacred interior, where it gradually died away in a diminuendo. It was Belch.

Whilst he stood there, he saw bald, pompous little men who doubled at the waist; tall, thin, hair-pin men who moved angularly, and even McGraw, who nodded to him cordially to his delight. But what he noticed about most of these men was that they seemed to feel their position keenly, moving and speaking not as ordinary mortals, though looking excessively commonplace, but with a sort of forced good-fellowship, tempered by a dignified assertiveness. They more than confirmed all his contempt for politics and politicians. He contrasted them with Creegan—even with the Labour members themselves, and felt the gap between idealism and commonplace reality.

Directed by the policeman, whom he approached as diffidently as anyone else, he found himself climbing a winding stone stairs, then past a suavely courteous gentleman in evening dress who asked him to put his

name in a book, which he did with the characteristic line underneath, making a murderous blot with the unaccustomed quill, and then through two more doors where he found himself in a musty, fusty atmosphere, that smelled yellow.

Coming out of the sepulchre of a place was a voice, speaking thinly from somewhere underneath. He had the feeling as he made his way to a seat in the steepness of the gallery, that he was about to topple headlong into the bosom of England's legislators. It was some minutes before his mind began to take in his surroundings.

The place had the "dim, religious light" of a cathedral, with the Speaker as a sort of high priest in his box, the long rows of men on the floor looking like choir men, at intervals erupting decorously to express indignation or assent. "Everything was done decently and in order" as though the place were a church. It was what he had so often militated against —"the tone of the House."

With a little thrill, he recognised Courcy, his shoulders bent, his long, slender legs twined inextricably. By his side he recognised also several of the great ones of British politics, whilst almost underneath him, below the Opposition, he saw the men who seemed to him the most human things in the place, from whose grey eyes and humorous mouths sometimes shot quick, sharp criticism, when a ripple of suppressed laughter ran around the House. They were politicians, but he loved them. They were his own race.

But his eyes did not travel long. Ever and again they came back to the place where the thin high voice of the speaker was leading the debate on behalf of the Government. The veined, domed forehead came out abysmally over the little, crafty eyes. The massive head with the pug nose, thrust forward characteristically

from the hunched shoulders, the keen quick thrust of the forefinger—all showed the famous man who represented Cheriton in the House of Commons, the last of the Winterhursts, of whom men spoke in bated breath, in admiring fearsomeness, as a mass of secret vices, though nothing definite seemed to be known about him except his exploits in the Boer War, which had filled the press of the Empire, and which had given him the V.C.

The man looked rotten to Destin—a shell with the light shining through the crannies. But it was a brilliant rottenness. He drove home his points, in which he showed himself as a friend of Labour—as its friendly adviser. After running through the misery of the strike to the women and children in tones that brought back Goldbeater's speech at the Great North-Western, he went on:

"As for us, we recognise that a fair day's wages for a fair day's work must be the object of all sides of the House. All classes of society are recognising the splendid work the Trade Unions have done to organise labour, but a giant's strength having been given them, they must not use it as a giant." There was gentle irony in his voice. "Since the incursion of Labour into this House, its representatives have won for themselves the praise of all parties" ("Hear-hear" from Courcy and a patronising chorus that rippled after him from the benches behind) "by their behaviour and by the moderation of tone which, like others, they have learned goes farthest in this assembly as outside. Again and again has Labour protested its moderation, and now is the time to prove to the nation its words, which I for one do not doubt are honestly meant."

The figure seemed to come forward a little, the finger was thrust downwards a trifle, and the voice went on—

"It is not what are called the employing classes who will use force, even though they have behind them the armed forces of the nation. That rests with Labour. The unhappy Black Mountain incident it is hoped will be the last of its kind, as otherwise in the near future we might find England in a state of civil war, in which the Government, in the national interests, would have no option but to crush it with a strong hand."

"The Big Stick you mean," came from a Labour man on whom Steltham frowned from his place on the front Labour bench. Even the Workers' Party leader, a perfectly honest and perfectly undistinguished man of the name of Johnson, who owed his position to the fact that he had been one of the first amongst the more prominent Trade Union officials to get into the House, looked at the offender in pained surprise.

"No," the speaker replied, "I mean the iron hand in the velvet glove."

The voice was still suave, but underneath there was an erosion, a burning, which showed itself more and more as the speaker proceeded. Nor could Destin fail to notice how the more ominous portions of his speech were received with silence from the benches around—not a condemnatory silence, but a brooding silence, as though the words should go home to the handful of Labour men, who sat silent and unconvinced, but over-awed. There could be no doubt about it. The interjections, which at the earlier stage had broken from them, gradually died away, but despite it, there was a stubbornness about them which reminded Destin of a child punished wrongfully, but who determines he will be naughty again at the first chance.

Winterhurst finished upon a note of optimism, winning from all parts of the House, including even a few on the Labour benches, a gentlemanly chorus of "Hear-hears!"

Steltham, who followed Winterhurst, was to Destin's surprise, received with quite an encouraging undercurrent of applause from both sides of the House. What mystified him in particular was that Courcy, who had attacked Steltham bitterly in the country, and Goldbeater who sat by him, added their quota to the general approbation. Steltham, whose face had been pale, flushed slightly and began his speech upon the nominal cause of debate, the wages for "difficult places" for miners, by a conciliatory appeal to all sections of the House, constantly referring to members in other parts of the House as "my Hon. friend," or "the Hon. and gallant member for so and so."

All these conciliatory appeals were backed enthusiastically by a knot of Labour members, who, he heard a man near him whisper, were the Miners' representatives, and who looked rather out of place amongst the others. McGraw alone, his white beard jutting out pugnaciously, his arms folded across his chest, listened with detachment.

Steltham's was a closely reasoned speech, but it seemed to Destin to lack "bite," and was in singular contrast to the face of the speaker, with its short, fighting, shearing nose, craggy jaw, and unquenchable eyes. It seemed to him "pumped up" when it passed from the reasoned to the pleading, but when he sat down all parts of the House applauded enthusiastically, Winterhurst smiling craftily under his bulging forehead, whilst Goldbeater's face creased itself into the Chinese joss look which Destin now knew so well. It was a successful speech, delivered with clearness and reserve.

A volley of welcome had rumbled round the House, grown in volume and died away. Destin could not see what was going forward, until the well-remembered bass boomed upwards from the Government front bench. It was Belch.

From some of the Labour members came angry cries of "Rat!" "Traitor!" but the stubborn, powerful figure that stood there on the floor of the House, the keen blue eyes facing round challengingly upon his former colleagues, did not blench. Whatever might be said of Belch, he had great courage, and had never wanted it more than now when he was making his first speech from the Front Bench.

There was nothing apologetic about the man, in his short rough pea-jacket, as, his left hand clenching a bundle of papers, he sprang into the middle of his speech. Behind him the massed Liberals looked at him doubtfully—even up there in the gallery Destin could feel that—whilst the Opposition found a new interest in the man who had baited them in the past more than any other representative of Labour.

The man himself had no more doubt of his present mission than he had ever had of the one that was closed for ever. The whip of Local Government had been given into his hands, and, if necessary, he would wield it as mercilessly against his former colleagues as he had done in the past against the men who now sat with him upon the Liberal benches. The voice boomed upwards, declaring its intention, in blasphemous omnipotence, of acting as the intermediary between Capital and Labour, "which now, in my present position, I shall be able to do with more effect that I ever could have done in the past."

The reiteration of the "I" came like the beat of a bass drum, punctuating his speech, which now no longer drew the plaudits even of his own men. There seemed to be a certain though indefinable distrust of the speaker, even amongst his present colleagues, which passed in the case of those he had left, to hatred and contempt.

The incarnate egotism of the man was fascinating

to watch, and when he sat down, obviously pleased with himself, the feeling of the House seemed to be crystallised by the voice of a man who sat below Destin in the gallery, a voice which he seemed to recognise, which shouted in a high treble—"You dirty traitor! you dirty traitor!" nor did it cease whilst the man himself was being bundled out by the policeman. "Dirty traitor!" could be heard dying away down the corridor. Even Belch flushed. The voice was Graney's.

Courcy was on his feet as Destin turned his eyes downwards again. In a speech of modulated grace, the Opposition leader paid a delicate compliment to the courage with which the Right Honourable member who had just spoken had not been afraid to fill what he called "the imminent deadly breach" of the Cabinet. "We all admire his forcefulness, even though our admiration may not be shared by certain portions of the House. . . . I include myself," he said, in rueful irony, in recollection of past battles with Belch, as a little laugh ran round the building.

"No doubt," he went on, "the Right Honourable member, with the aid of his former colleagues, whose cause he is doubtless serving more excellently in his present position than he ever could have done before, as he said himself, with a frankness which is peculiarly his own, and with whom his parting is really a service," (an indescribable irony ran through his words) "will be able to adjust the points in dispute between Capital and Labour."

His words flowed on mellifluously, though every now and then they checked for a moment to sting, then flowing on as before as though the interjection were a mere ornament of rhetoric. But one thing occurred again and again in his speech as Destin noticed, the assertion that in this case both Government and

Opposition were at one. "In matters where national interests are concerned, of which this is one; where widespread misery exists through unemployment—unnecessary unemployment let me add—where millions of people are incommoded from going about their business through lack of trains—where the homes of England lack fire and light—then, whilst anxious to make the fullest possible concessions to Labour, we have a national duty to perform, and in that performance all party differences are sunk, as they will always be sunk. In the words of my Right Honourable friend, we prefer to use 'the velvet glove,' but there is 'an iron hand' inside it."

Again Destin felt that strangulation—that sense of helplessness—he had felt at the Conference. There was the same certainty—the same passionlessness.

Passing on quickly, his face lighted by one of his rare smiles, the Opposition leader associated himself with Winterhurst in the just tribute he had paid to the Workers' Party in the House. "At the beginning, it was true, some of them on the Opposition benches had feared that the Mother of Parliaments might lose her reputation for suavity of debate and chivalrous courtesy, but he was happy to say that such had not been the case, as the Honourable members opposite had kept up that reputation and supported the traditions of the House. He was sure that in the rest of the debate, so admirably continued on behalf of Labour by the Honourable member for Westburn, no jarring note would interfere with what promised to be a mutually satisfactory settlement of the points at issue, which had been so ably and moderately set out by the Honourable member who distinguishes the Workers' Party by his leadership and by his Right Honourable friend, the member for Cheriton."

The tone of the chamber had become curiously warm

and friendly. The leaders of both sides beamed on each other, whilst the Prime Minister, a fine-looking man, whose head might have been carved from a block of teak, his white hair falling picturesquely around his noble forehead and jaw, smiled in the benevolent, dignified way famous throughout the illustrateds as "the Transome smile."

There was still a certain stubbornness about the Labour men, but it was obvious they had been softened and were now only anxious to come to a settlement. The place had become a vast pigeon-loft, in which only the billing and cooing of politics could be heard. Some of the members, in low courteous rumblings were murmuring "'Vide, 'Vide." They evidently regarded the debate as good as over.

There was a sudden stiffening of the faces as Destin ran his eye along the benches. It was as though a chill breath had passed over the House. The faces, broken a moment ago, were now all staring one way, looking at the figure which had risen near the end of the front Labour bench.

It was not the first time Destin had seen the man who was about to speak, the man whose figure, like a figure of fate, dominated every labour congress, as it dominated the most difficult assembly in the world—the British House of Commons. "Kisterling's up!" had run through the corridors outside, and there was a hurrying in at the doors of members who had run from the smoking rooms and dining rooms to hear the man who so seldom spoke.

He stood there, one hand clenched on his slender hip, the body crippled by a cruel accident in the days when he had driven a pen in a Birmingham office, but indomitable, tense. Above the bulging forehead, high and vast, the green eyes set deeply under the over-hanging, rather bushy, brows; the nose straight and

keen as the stem of a liner; the ears placed closely to the head in the manner of the fighter; and the most terrible jaw and mouth in the House. The jaw, the jaw of the political fighting-man—the mouth, thin-lipped, scorpion, fit channel for the most biting tongue in the chamber, not excepting that of Courcy. "Corrosive Sublimate," they called him.

The words came gently, almost caressingly, from the thin lips as he opened delicately but inexorably, feeling his way to the facts of the dispute, which he marshalled one by one until they stood limned before his hearers. He was speaking easily, shouldering his way through his figures as a yacht shoulders her way through a long, gently heaving sea. But now and then there would be a hiss of spume, and as Destin watched the lips he could almost see the forked tongue flicker out for a moment, then disappear.

Column by column he marshalled his figures, making living facts of the dry bones of statistics. Then, his groundwork prepared and the foundations made ready, as a gun platform is made ready for the weapon it is to support, he paused for a moment, gazing around and through the silence which enveloped him. In an instant he had swung round, facing Steltham, who sat, his arms folded sulkily a few seats from him, and in defiance of all known rules of debate, proceeded to lay bare the skeleton of his colleague's facts.

With the eye and hand of an anatomist of words, he bared the faulty logic, taking limb from limb, fibre from fibre, until he left on the operating table of the House a thing of disarticulation.

With vitriolic irony, he dwelt upon the imperfect grip of Labour itself upon its own facts, but said emphatically that he stood, not for Labour's supposed leaders, but for the voiceless masses of the rank and

file outside Parliament who could not speak for themselves. There was no appeal to sentiment—no frothy rhetoric, yet his speech was a rhetorical masterpiece.

Passing from his colleague, who smiled darkly and perhaps derisively, he turned coldly towards Belch. As he looked at him an instant before speaking, Destin saw the doomed man blench just a shade—so slightly that if he had not been watching him closely he would have thought it imagination—and then brace himself to the blast. Stinging, the words whipped out from the lips—each word barbed and poison-tipped, punctuated by the long thin index finger, thrust rapier-like before him. Keeping his feet, unentangled by the rules of debate of the House, those hair lines used to catch the feet of the unwary, he spoke of Judas and thirty pieces of silver, without referring directly to the man himself. Again and again he drove his weapon home, until Belch, for the first time in the memory of man, lost his colour and his self-possession, his eyes staring haggardly out before him.

The benches of the two chief parties were now watching him with joy unconcealed, for here was "the house divided against itself." But in the middle of a spatter of uneasy laughter at some particularly keen thrust, the cold green eyes had run along the benches, and the smiles had fixed themselves.

In a passionless, resistless review, he had dropped the stilettos of argument and was using the whip upon the shoulders of those who crouched before him, for the thrust of the forefinger had become a beat—the beat of a whip. Destin could see the pale figure, like that of Death, straddling over the benches, flogging them into impotent fury. Again and again like a figure of revolution the figure raised itself and flailed the men who cowered there before the beat of the long lean finger as though accused by the finger of God.

Higher and higher it rose, dominating the House, until with one last contemptuous stroke, the figure had flung away the whip and sunk into invisibility.

There was a tinkling of bells. A confused scuttering on the floor, and the bruised men had hurried out to the division, their backs a little bowed it seemed to Destin, and when the figures were announced on the floor of the House, Destin found that Labour had been beaten to earth, smashed into helplessness by the dead weight of a united House, but all "decently and in order." "Iron and velvet."

As he sat there and watched the procession of the tellers up the floor of the chamber, a great passion rose within him—a passion which would find its vent in hewing and smashing—in the abyss of physical force.

"The tone of the House!" He hated them with the hate of the impotent. Strangled, stifled, as he was, again there stirred within him that flickering hope which always came in his moments of dark depression, and as he walked out of the building, his loins girt, it was with unquenchable resolution to plough his row to the end.

X

THE PARLIAMENT OF LABOUR

WHEN Destin opened his *Daily Meteor* the next morning, he found the labour debate almost hidden by a big murder, in which, in the words of its editor, there was the cardinal selling-trinity of fighting, flirting, and finance. The outline of the debate alone was given, but on the leader page there were a few lines as a sub-leader:

"LABOUR UNREST

"The country which has so anxiously awaited the labour debate will turn with satisfaction this morning to the splendid moderation of the speeches from all sides of the House, and from none more than from the Labour benches, which, however, was marred by an unfortunate and intemperately worded incursion into the debate by Mr. Kisterling, who, however, has the satisfaction of knowing that he represents no one but himself. Now that the crux of the labour unrest has been thrashed out in full and free debate in Parliament, and as the majority of the people's representatives have decided against the claims of Labour, it is to be hoped that the private conference between Masters and Men, which is to resume its sittings to-morrow, will take the hint. Nothing could be more repugnant to the mind of the Government than that the force element should further enter into the

struggle, with the danger of its becoming an integral part of the disputes between Capital and Labour."

"Force." That was the word which stood out from all the others in the mind of Destin. Surely the Radical papers, which had all along professed their sympathy with the claims of Trades Unionism generally, would take a different tone. After breakfast, Destin went into the neighbouring library and there read the notices in the Liberal dailies. His eye caught—"The upholding of the traditions of the House . . ." "moderation of Labour's tone . . ." "fine common-sense of the miners' representatives . . ." "Mr. Kisterling's unfortunate remarks." And through the whole, like a thin red line, the frequent recurrence of the assertion that "where national interests were involved, the historic parties of the House find themselves at one."

This was set out in various forms, in a play and interplay of words and meanings—but it always came back to the point that the historic parties as guardians of the nation's rights were of one mind.

He knew that it was "all over, bar shouting," as a Labour journalist told him in Fleet Street, and when the next day's Conference was held at the Great North-Western, at which Belch did not put in an appearance, it was to find the Labour delegates anxious to settle the whole thing quickly ere worse befell them.

There was no crowing over the defeat of Labour by the Masters. It was true that Goldbeater looked like a snake just after the act of deglutition, and Goring a little more swollen than usual—but the behaviour of Muschamp, Sir Claude Crespigny, and the other representatives of the Masters, was all that could be desired, while Sir James Bulkley was consideration

itself. Westerley still puffed his cigar nonchalantly at the ceiling, Steltham looked much as before, whilst the miners' delegates were obviously more than pleased at the cessation of hostilities.

McGraw alone sat a little more heavily in his chair, Creegan, indomitable as ever, being the one harsh note of a peaceful finish, not speaking it is true, but sitting crouched over his blotting pad. He took no part in the proceedings, and when on the final vote Labour went down to defeat, he refused to hold up his hand one way or the other.

Denis Destin stood at the crossroads. This he felt as he sat in "The Silver Herring," a little coffee house near the Great North-Western, waiting for Creegan, who had asked him to meet him there after the conference. The whole business from the first day's sitting, through the debate in the House, down to the pitiful aftermath of that morning, fell upon him crushingly. First the Big Stick on the head—then the Stiletto through the heart. "Iron and Velvet." These were the things that ran shadow-like through his brain.

The thing that struck cold to him was the apathy of the politicians, and not so much their apathy as the fact that they were the accredited representatives of Demos in the supreme tribunal. If the working-man could make that mistake, where was that "Vox populi—vox Dei!" of which he was never tired of speaking from the platform? And through all this depression, and the blind infatuation with the will o' the wisp of political action, there straggled flit-tingly McGraw and Kisterling and half a dozen other men whom he knew to be not only absolutely honest—for every Labour member was that—but militant and idealist.

The fine freedom of the Syndicalist faith—the clean,

direct solution for all social evils—the General Strike . . . all this seemed pitiful also in face of the facts. He knew that Syndicalism had scarcely a foothold in the Unions—he knew, though he often tried not to know, that even the Syndicalist leaders themselves, and always with the exception of Creegan, whilst talking so much of idealism in politics, were sometimes far from being idealist in their lives. What was the use of it all?

Then there came to him Creegan. Creegan, the indomitable, brutal tyrant of the workers. Creegan, the self-educated Irishman from a Dublin back-block. Creegan, the most despised and attacked man in the Labour movement, fighting a lone hand not only against the apathy of the Unions but even against the Labour leaders themselves.

Creegan, the dreamer, who even admitted that visions came to him in the night watches. Creegan, the devout Romanist, who believed in saints and devils, and who was cursed and disowned by the hierarchy of his own church. Creegan—the beaten, broken Creegan.

It was with that figure of the beaten, broken man that now came to him a feeling of fatality—the feeling that whatever the cost to himself, and despite what he knew to be his own passion for domination, he would follow Brian Creegan to the end of the road. He knew that he, like the others, was caught up in a machine from which he was powerless to free himself, which he could not control, and which might either absorb him, or spew him out a broken, bloody mass. But for good or ill he was part of that machine—the turning, rending, blind machine of Labour.

He was roused from the vision he had conjured by the voice of Creegan himself, who was asking

the girl to give him a cup of tea and some scones "or anything you have, Miss." Creegan had a great love for tea, which he drank poisonously strong, and it was an old bone of contention between Destin and himself, for Destin, who had a lust for reformation not second to Creegan's own, had a habit of going into minutiæ of this kind. But Creegan still drank his tea.

It was to lay their plans for the coming Workers' Party Congress to be held in the next week at Circester that Creegan had asked him to meet him. Destin was now a sort of Assistant Secretary to the Transport Union, of which Creegan was the Secretary, working a few hours each evening after his journalism and receiving the nominal remuneration of ten shillings a week, so as to make him a paid agent of the society, and therefore "a Transport Worker." He and Creegan, amongst others, were the delegates to the coming Congress.

Creegan as he bent over his tea looked like a man with a beaten head. Destin could almost see the marks of the Big Stick—but the spirit was dauntless as ever. He found this dour Irishman entirely uncowed, and when he had heard him plunge into the machinery of the Congress to come, laying his plans carefully, he felt again that, short of killing him, the man did not live who could stop Brian Creegan.

The Congress was vital to Labour it seemed, for in it the Syndicalists were about to make their first Congress attack upon the fort of Political Action. It gave new vitality to the man listening to him, as he spoke, a flush on his face, of the possibilities of the Congress—"if we can only get our fellows to work together." He repeated—"If we can only get our fellows to work together." That had always been the difficulty amongst the Syndicalists, who, demand-

ing the freest individual action, were rather a handful, and Creegan alone could do anything with them. Even Creegan at times, domineering as he was, feared to go too far, for though a Syndicalist himself, his Union still favoured political as well as strike action, though, under his lead, the Syndicalists had managed to get most of the chief positions. He generally drove them on the curb, but sometimes used the light rein.

It was outside the Town Hall at Circester a week later that Destin again met his chief. He was standing in the cold wind of the March morning, his dust overcoat buttoned close around his neck, the invariable long cheroot in his mouth jutting at an aggressive angle under the sugar-loaf hat which brimmed the whole. Around him were twenty or thirty delegates, who were listening to some final word. While he was speaking, Johnson, the chairman of the Workers' Party, came past, smiling in the grim good-humour of a man on the successful side, as he caught sight of the group. Steltham walked a few steps behind, but there was no question of the darkling of his smile.

Men were standing on the steps of the building; lounging in the passages; talking around the brilliant red bookstall covered with Socialist publications; and when Destin walked to his place almost under the gallery of the hall, with its long trestle tables covered neatly with sheets of foolscap, pencils, printed leaflets, and agendas of the Congress, he heard the scuttering and mumbling of the delegates who were slowly taking their places.

Steltham was the chairman of the Congress. He sat up there on the platform frowning over the agenda before him. Ranged on either side of him were the other members of the executive, men of all

types from burly navvies and broad, smooth-faced miners, to wiry engineers. Those were the Seats of the Mighty, and when Steltham jerked himself to his feet and struck the bell before him, the delegates who were still straggling into the hall, hurried to their places and sat expectant.

Steltham read his chairman's address. It began "My Friends," and after running through the events of the previous year, breathed a placid hope for the best possible results of their deliberations. It was a non-committal address and, if anything, lacked originality and forcefulness, though here and there broke a sentence of singular strength, and even of revolution, which sounded oddly upon the lips of the man himself. Destin could not help but feel that this man was torn between two policies—he had noticed it at the Great North-Western — between his natural and fundamental cautiousness and a certain unruly, revolutionary feeling which would not be stifled, but sometimes popped its head up until it was smothered by caution. Steltham could never forget, nor was he allowed to forget, that he was "the Strong Man of the movement."

When he had finished, there was hearty applause, for Steltham appealed to nearly every man there. It was then it came to Destin that this assembly, like that other, did everything "decently and in order," for the organ over the platform burst into an old hymn tune as the Mayor of the town, a little penguin-man in red robes and gold chain, with mace-bearer and aldermen complete, waddled solemnly on to the platform to read his address of welcome to the city. His message, like Steltham's, breathed the spirit of good-will. There was a certain sonorous vagueness about his speech, which had many rolling phrases—"national importance;" "united deliberations;" "all

parties agreed," and so on. The Mayor even sang the concluding labour song led by the organ—though he stood a little stiffly perhaps—and when he had done so, retired as solemnly as he had entered, with his train of aldermen and preceded by the mace-bearer, to the rousing cheers of the delegates, who seemed to Destin to be rather like schoolboys out for a rag. It was evidently their desire to be on the best terms with everybody. There was nothing revolutionary about them.

They plunged into the agenda, after electing a Standing Orders Committee to expedite the business of the Congress. As the chairman read out resolution after resolution—all of the "pious" sort, he heard a Transport Worker growl to his mate—the delegates chaunted "agreed—agreed," as though they were a congregation responding to a priest.

There was a hypnotism about the proceedings, as half a dozen resolutions were rapidly polished off, to the confusion of Destin, who vainly tried to follow them on the agenda before him, when an insignificant resolution came up which stated that the Congress was agreed upon the arbitration board as the best method of settling disputes between Capital and Labour.

"Is it agreed, my friends?" asked the chairman blandly. "Agreed—agreed" was being murmured, when there cut across the drone angry "No, no's." The peace of the Congress was disturbed. It was the first feeling out of the rival parties.

Creegan had told Destin that he had been unable to get his men together before the Congress as had been agreed, so as to fix their final plans of action. There were stray Syndicalist delegates from other Unions, but their action it seemed was a little uncertain. The only thing that had been arranged was that Wildish should lead off in opposing arbitration.

It seemed that, despite his general rebelliousness, the orthodoxy of the Clerks' Union, which had sent him as its representative, had broken down before the magic of the "M.P." after his name.

Now, Creegan searched the benches, looking eagerly for the broad, smiling face, but no Wildish arose. Consequently, a young Syndicalist a few paces away, unknown, but eager to win his spurs, jumped up, to Creegan's chagrin, and in a speech, voluble and resonant, as though he were haranguing a crowd in Trafalgar Square, he opposed the resolution.

When he opened, it was not difficult to see the complacency of the men on the platform. There was a sort of "The Lord hath delivered the enemy into our hands" about them, which was particularly galling. Yet Steltham showed the speaker every latitude—for again and again when he wandered from the main resolution, chasing all sorts of will o' the wisps down all kinds of by-paths, the courteous guiding hand of the chairman brought him gently back again instead of ruling him out of order.

When the chairman at last had banged his bell more than once to enforce the time limit, and only then, the young stalwart, a compositor, whose delicate frame and pasty face gave the lie to a tremendous voice, sat down in the middle of a sentence, quite spoiling any effect the speech might have had. The honest faces of the workers grinned delightedly. The speech had "cut no ice."

"Let it go now!" growled Creegan under his breath. "But, curse him! where's Wildish?" He got his answer, for at that moment, cheerful as ever, Wildish, a good-humoured grin on his face, came in, making his way to Creegan's side—"Awfully sorry, Brian, old boy—but I met a friend." Creegan gave him his shoulder.

The Syndicalist amendment was lost by an overwhelming show of hands. Wildish made an attempt to challenge the vote and demanded a ballot in a loud voice, slightly hoarse. But Creegan pulled him down.

It was however but a skirmish—the main issue would be raised later. But the politicals had won the first round—and as Destin knew by now, these first rounds had a habit of deciding the big issues later.

A stream of resolutions ran easily off the chairman's bat. The Congress was again peaceful, but it was the peace of the boa constrictor after digestion.

One of the men who took part in the debate struck him. He was the Secretary of a Dockers' Union, whose broken, scarred face proclaimed the danger of his former toil in an explosives factory. It was this broken object, the face drawn to one side in a grin, who with dry humour and loving outlook on life, made the delegates laugh again and again.

Once more it was borne in on him that the Labour leader was not a type—that in "the movement" all types were to be found. For this man was followed by a blonde chestnut giant from the Yorkshire cotton mills, and he by a little black-eyed middle-class woman who made her way to the heart of the Congress in a cultured, restrained voice. Here, a lanky engineer from a London shed was followed by a little man under five feet with a trombone voice, who rose from under his arm and who stared owl-like after he had made each point to see its effect. Saturnine men succeeded easy-going men—men of humour, men of action—and men of action, men of the study. This indeed was a colony of types; all devoted to one end. The Syndicalists alone formed

a group type—both in speech and action. But he found that the Syndicalists did not count, with the exception of Creegan, who had a certain dour influence of his own, even amongst those who disliked him and his methods.

Destin had been turning over his particular seconding speech on the main resolution of policy, when there was a silence. All eyes were turned on the platform, where a flash of scarlet caught the eye. This flash of scarlet had been running backwards and forwards at the back of the hall during the whole morning in Destin's eye, though he had been too engaged to notice it more distinctly. Then he remembered.

It was Satalia, the woman he had heard that day in the summer in Hyde Park. The chairman was introducing her as the fraternal delegate of the French Transport Workers, and was asking for suspension of the Standing Orders—those Standing Orders which were a sort of religious seal upon the whole of the proceedings—in order that she might be heard, after which, he said, they would take the resolution upon party policy, to be moved by the Transport Workers. A shout of assent went up from the delegates, who roared full-lunged at the striking, though rather flamboyant figure which now took the centre of the platform.

She wore the same Buffalo Bill hat, slashed with scarlet—turned up very much on one side and down on the other, and a tight-fitting costume of smooth blue serge, red-bodiced. The tiny hands sunk in the natty side pockets of her jacket, the Frenchwoman began to speak in excellent English.

Yet, Destin could not but feel that this theatrical appearance made the sober-looking men around him uneasy. They listened with courtesy it is true, but

with an air of unmistakable dissent if not of boredom, for the whole of the speech was a violent incitement to Direct Action, which, according to the speaker, alone gave the workers a chance with the masters. It was, she said, sweeping over Italy, France, and Spain, whilst its beginning in England presaged final victory.

Here again Destin found that ingrained love of facts. For the first time, a low grumble of dissent went up, circled, and subsided.

"No, no."

The eyes of the woman on the platform, which moved curiously independent of each other, as one sometimes sees in dogs and Spanish dancers, ran around the hall. From where he sat, he caught the gleam of the free eye. It brightened as a counter of approval came from Creegan's men in different parts of the hall, and it was evident that she regarded this minority as the dominating fraction, for her voice, which had halted for a moment, took its old note of confidence, pointing out the vast strikes of the previous months as evidence of the revolutionary spirit of the British workers. She was swimming along when a voice in broad Yorkshire boomed across her own—"Nay, lass, thou doesn't know t'Englishmen!" A roar of laughter followed, which killed the speech, the lady, after a concluding sentence or two, retiring as gracefully as possible.

Steltham was courtesy itself, bowing to her ere she left, but when he turned to the agenda it was with a certain satisfaction in his face.

"May I venture to suggest that we take the resolution on Labour Policy, friends," he asked, "so that after lunch we can get on with the mass of other business waiting?"

A chorus of "Ayes!" went up.

"No, no!" protested the Syndicalists.

"If he rushes this through before lunch we won't get a discussion," Creegan whispered to Destin, shouting "No, no!" at intervals. But the Congress was overwhelmingly in favour of taking the resolution then, and the Syndicalists once more found themselves beaten by what Creegan called "the caucus," which according to him settled all these things to a hair's breadth ere they entered the hall, giving them a big, though he did not say unfair, advantage over the Direct Actionists, who never seemed able to get together. He admitted that in their place he would do the same. This rather shocked Destin, who had always put these unworthy tricks of political card-playing down to the politicals.

The resolution itself was scarcely more than half a dozen words—"That this Congress of the Workers' Party affirms its belief in Parliamentary action as the main line for Labour's advance."

Destin expected to see one of the older members of the Party get up to move the resolution, but was surprised when a young delegate, who, incidentally, had been a Direct Actionist up to the year before and was therefore "a traitor," catch the chairman's eye.

This young man, a Scotsman, was admirably cool and restrained. He outlined forcefully but with moderation the victories won in Parliament from the inception of the Party there. He touched lightly and not unkindly upon the failure of the strike in the previous months, and avowed with a frankness that won the mass of the delegates his own conversion from Syndicalism. . . . "The Great Strike was the cold douche that brought me to my senses."

"Rat! rat!" yelled the young Syndicalist who had spoken. In a moment the chairman was on his feet and waving the Scotsman to his seat.

"Just a moment, my friends," he said soothingly, but

with that sureness underneath which Destin had seen before. "In this assembly we pride ourselves upon our good manners. That last word is, if I may say so, not only unparliamentary but dirty. 'Dirty,' I said. As a matter of decency, and I hope the gentlemen of the press will ignore the incident, I ask you to withdraw it."

"Withdraw! withdraw!" was shouted. For a moment the angry delegate showed fight, but finally made a sort of apology, which was applauded by the delegates as the *amende honorable.*

"Now the debate can go on," said Steltham settling himself comfortably in his chair.

It had nothing to do with the debate, but Destin felt in that moment that the interrupting delegate had destroyed the Syndicalist case. Good manners he found were not the privilege of the aristocrat, but were also worshipped by that strange animal, Demos. "Put yourself wrong with the Congress," growled Creegan, "and you might as well stay outside."

The mover of the political policy resolution resumed his speech, being enthusiastically cheered as he made his points. Labour loved nothing so much as the prodigal son, and always had the fatted calf warmed and ready.

Creegan had been called out to see an Irish friend who brought him urgent news from Belfast. He went, telling Destin he would return in a moment to move the amendment, as it was obvious that the advocate of political policy having another fifteen minutes to go, would use them. As it happened, this young man, who had a very shrewd head on very young shoulders, caught sight of Creegan leaving the hall, and instantly saw a chance for a *coup.* Saying that the case for Parliamentary action was so obvious, he did not propose to burden the delegates with any more arguments,

he sat down abruptly. The delegates, who seemed to like nothing better than a long speech except a short one, gave him wholehearted applause.

"Any amendment?" asked the chairman, turning instinctively to Creegan's empty place. The eye of every delegate followed his own, waiting for the form of the Syndicalist chief to rise. But there was no Creegan.

"If there is no amendment, and it having been seconded, I propose to put the resolution," said the chairman evenly, when Destin, staggered for a moment by Creegan's absence, sprang into the breach, and rose, saying—"I move an amendment."

Agitated though he was, from where he stood he could see something like disappointment upon the faces of the executive. McGraw alone smiled. It heartened him.

Destin's was the one speech that filled the headlines of the capitalist papers the following day, for it was the first attack ever made in the Workers' Congress upon parliamentary policy. He excelled himself, for always braced to the big occasion, he took his points one by one, making them, if more passionately, as coolly as the man who had moved the resolution. His depression vanished in a moment under the stimulus of battle. Like another Sir Galahad he felt that his was a holy mission—that his weapon was not the tongue but the sword—that he was a pioneer of his time.

Like the policy he represented, he used the direct action method, going straight for the heart of the enemy. With a sweeping brush he painted in the story of the Great North-Western conference—of the Big Stick—and then in more delicate colours the stiletto in the House of Commons. For the disastrous defeat of the strike he made no apologies, emerging from the welter

with the flag of revolution in his hands, and prophesying with the fires of fanaticism now burning through the caution of his earlier periods, the annihilation of the Parliamentarians and the coming of the General Strike.

Lost to his surroundings in his Celtic abandonment, he had not seen Creegan steal in as he spoke. It was not until he felt the sinewy hand pressing the hollow of his arm and heard the voice—"Well done, boy!" that he knew the joys of approving comradeship. In that moment he felt a great happiness.

Creegan saw that any attempt at a speech would destroy the effect of his lieutenant, so he contented himself with formally seconding.

Yet even here Destin would have wished to have had a less noisy appreciation when he had finished. There had been a silence—the silence which told him that he had got home, when his followers, led by Wildish, who had no jealousy, had jumped to their feet, screaming incoherently. It was once more what he was finding to be the fatal exuberance of the Syndicalist. No doubt it sprang from an overwhelming belief in direct action, and it was all very well in its way, but it had a habit of coming in at the wrong moment.

When he had finished, speeches were made by men from either side—many of them young men obviously anxious "to get there." He wondered why the older leaders of the Parliamentarians had not spoken, when he found that they had been reserving themselves to the last.

The man they had chosen to speak for them was McGraw, above all others. McGraw whom Destin nearly loved. And it was McGraw, standing up, who was now speaking.

It was McGraw who in his broad Scottish complimented Destin on his speech, which he described as

"bonny" . . . "which gives us all the assurance of a promising career, which I hope," he added with a twinkle, "will be devoted to the interests of political action." With the skill of the old hand, he showed that political action was not opposed to strike action. "They are like husband and wife, comrades—when they pull together they can move mountains—divided, they perish. They may quarrel ye ken, but heaven help anybody who tries to come between them."

A shout of laughter went up, and in it Destin found that laughter, not anger, was the great solvent.

McGraw continued—"We stand for the dual policy—our opponents for a one-armed, and, let me add, one-eyed policy. The Syndicalist strike-weapon is a two-edged sword which may or may not kill its enemy in its sweep, but which may cut the man who holds it on its return swing. My own wing of the Workers' Party may not always see eye to eye with their comrades, may sometimes think that we tak' too little whuskey in our water, but that doesn't mean we are going over to pure spirit—to the delirium of direct action unwatered by political action."

It was this shrewd, honest, forceful Scotsman—the patriarch of Labour—beloved by all, who turned any transient ideas of Syndicalism away from the delegates, the card vote leaving the Syndicalists overwhelmed. Even as he listened, it seemed to Destin that he was being seduced from the faith. The man himself looked so clean and "good"—so different to the many Syndicalist leaders he had known, men, sometimes, of unrestrained action, political and moral—that he felt though his heart lay with the Syndicalists, something deeper yet called to him to take his place in the ranks of his present adversaries.

But one look at Creegan made him forget all that. This was his peerless knight—the man whose escut-

cheon had never been stained. Brian Creegan at least was pure-hearted and pure-souled.

Yet for that day and many days after, these things flitted shadow-like across the retina of his mind. Persons and policies—principles and parties—became inextricably blended. He found himself in despair trying to find the truth of these things, and failing.

Destin had been up in the gallery to see Creegan, when, looking about him, he heard Creegan's voice behind him—"This is Mr. Destin. Denis—a countrywoman of ours—one of the Danes, though she hasn't red hair." It was one of Creegan's rare attempts at humour, and had reference to a popular superstition in the South of Ireland.

Destin looked into the face of a slender girl in the middle twenties, whose green eyes searched him indifferently but surely. With her frame of thick, black-brown hair, with something of bronze caught in its meshes, cut squarely to the neck and brushed rather low on the high, square forehead, she seemed to have a quality different to that of any woman he had seen. Her dress, of some rough green stuff, close-fitting and in one piece, cut away around the clean, firm neck, set off her graceful, rather boyish figure.

But it was to the eyes of this girl who now sat by his side looking down into the body of the hall, the eyes with the strange green lights in them, to which he always returned. They permeated him like a flow of water, leaving no distinct impression behind, but only a glow—an influence.

He asked her the part of Ireland from which she came, and caught the deep resonance of the voice with the slightest Southern roll—a brogue so faint that it ran through the colder English like the voice of the curling wave upon the iron beach. For there was something of iron as well as softness in the voice.

She was from the South, the child of a Danish father and an Irish mother, born and reared in Ireland. She had, however, travelled much with her father, he discovered afterwards, and had studied the Labour movement in many countries, having just published her first book, a novel, using the movement as her basis.

"There's a man who will break his heart one day."

She was looking down at Creegan, who had left them and who was now challenging a platform ruling in low, hard tones. The sureness of the girl irritated him. It was an irritation he learned to know well in the months that followed.

"How do you know?" he queried a little impatiently. "There are not many who know Brian Creegan."

"I know him," she said quietly.

In a moment Destin had launched into an argument in which all the protestation was on his side. No, Creegan was going on from strength to strength to triumph over his enemies.

"But, who *are* his enemies?" the girl interposed quietly—"Mr. McGraw or the capitalist class? Won't you put a name on them?" There was quiet irony in the Irish idiom as it came from her lips.

Destin came to a halt. Who *were* Creegan's enemies? For years he had been embattled quite as much with the politicals, as with the hated capitalists. But, after all, it was Steltham and Manby who prevented Creegan from doing his work effectively for the regeneration of society. Anyone could see at a glance in the present Congress as one had seen it in past Congresses, that these politicals were playing only for their own hands—that they were labour-fakirs and labour-hazers. Could she deny it?

"Do you include McGraw?" she asked again, a little smile at the back of her eyes, which shone greenly.

Destin knew that if she had said Steltham or Belch or Manby or Johnson, he would have felt himself free to reply. But McGraw—and the McGraw sort in the Independent Socialists—that was different. He could not, dare not, launch the fulminations he would have launched if the others had been mentioned.

He fell back upon neutral ground.

"Can't you see the trickery and wire-pulling at the present Congress?" he asked. "Don't you know they mean to kill Creegan if they can? A blind man could see that," he said rudely. There was something about the quietness and quickness of this girl that was exasperating.

"If you Syndicalists were in the same position as the politicals—wouldn't you do the same? . . . Now wouldn't you?" she added in pleading irony.

He was about to deny it indignantly, when he remembered Creegan's assertion to the contrary. The girl before him probably knew it also. He was silent.

"Can ye not see, for even a blind man can see it—" the little earnest face, shrouded in its short black square-cut hair, smiled at him sweetly—"can ye not see that all these Congresses, like the men behind them, are mixtures of good and evil—of blacks and whites and greys? Can ye not see that these men are all more or less mastered by the machine—even Brian Creegan? Don't ye know that Torquemada himself was an honest fanatic—that Creegan, and in another sense McGraw and Steltham, are also honest fanatics? Once these men persuade themselves they are right—and there are few political Machiavellis, the rest is easy. Everything becomes justified. It is the story of the Jesuitry over again—for there are political as well as religious Jesuits. Perhaps we are all Jesuits," she said a little wistfully.

"But if what you say is true, what is the good of

democracy?" he asked, in blind anger and disappointment. "If the people's leaders are Jesuits—what is the good of the people who elect them? Isn't anarchy the only thing left open to a reasonable man?"

"There is always the common people behind," she replied. "The common people, like the un-common, are inexpressibly brutal and cruel and stupid and intuitive and omniscient and true. The Collective Consciousness is a terrible machine—but it works out absolutely true in time. The people make mistakes. The people elect the wrong men. But the people are always the heart of all things, good and evil. To quarrel with the people is to quarrel with God. They *are* God."

"Then you, even you who criticise so freely, make a God of Democracy."

"I don't make it a God. It *is* a God. The majority is always wrong and always right. From the wrong majority of to-day comes the conscious and right minority of to-morrow, yielding in its turn to the other majorities—the eternal majority."

The girl had dropped her irony. The eyes were flashing greenly and surely. The pale face was lighted. The strong straight nose and pointed square jaw—like the jaw of a serpent—had set. She was sureness itself. The woman of the future was speaking—the woman of intuition and consciousness.

"Then you believe in Democracy?" he asked despairing, trying to have the thing brought to a definite issue.

"I believe in nothing but myself," she said, and she laughed again. "If you ask me whether I believe in the people, I say I must do so if I am to believe in myself. . . . But you surely haven't kept me here to discuss sociology. I am only a girl you know, and here you are making me talk like Ecclesiastes."

"But then, we can't all be right," Destin said finally.

"We are all right and all wrong. The truth doesn't lie in the Syndicalist any more than it lies in the political camp—in anarchy any more than in collectivism. The truth lies between. It always lies between. The truth lies in paradox."

And it was on that word, coming so strangely from this girl, that he left her. Creegan was beckoning to him from the hall.

"Paradox." "Syndicalism." "Democracy." The words spun through his brain. But always "paradox."

Perhaps the earth was not intended to be a finishing school—but only a place of paradox—a place of preparation and fight.

XI

THE RIGHT TO LIVE

At this time Denis Destin had his hands full. Rushing from one thing to another, he lived on his nerves. He had become a sort of nerve-drunkard, forced to keep moving, satiating himself on excitement. He passed from meeting to meeting, now snatching a few hours to dash off an article, then rushing to one of Miss Craven's democratic functions at Hampstead, where he plunged himself to the neck in argument, expostulation, and even vituperation—then sometimes to one of the Duchess of Chillington's evenings, where he held his fashionable audience, and himself, spell-bound with the power of his denunciation, for by now he had become quite a fashionable revolutionist in certain select circles.

He felt more and more that he was a person who mattered. Denis Destin was drunk—drunk on democracy.

Fleet Street by now wanted him. He found as one of the Fleet Street paradoxes that the more revolutionary and the more inimical to Capital he became, the more Capital ran after him. The *Meteor* had asked him to contribute a short weekly article to be called "The Labour Thermometer," in which he was supposed to have exclusive knowledge of the temperature of Demos. He was in a constant state of astonishment to find out how much he knew and how accurate were his forecasts. These things came to him "as in a glass, darkly."

But everything grated him—even success. The more successful he became, and the quicker those pink cheques unfolded themselves, the more angry he was. Yet at no time could he have said why he was angry.

There was Vesta Craven for instance. Whenever he found himself near her, and that was pretty often, she raw-edged him. They had been on the verge of quarrelling more than once, and it was only Miss Craven's admirable tactfulness and capacity for managing that saved a breach. And nothing angered him more than her tact, even whilst it mollified him.

Especially since the Circester Congress, he felt something against her approaching resentment, and, as he had to acknowledge to himself, for no real reason. Perhaps the cavalier fashion in which she had received his declaration at the Hampstead flat had hurt him. Her well-groomed appearance—her method of holding her cigarette, and the dainty thoughtful way in which she cocked her little chin and expelled a thin stream of smoke, or blew a smoke-ring, all worked upon him in a nervous sort of way. It was only when he was away from her that she attracted him now, though he knew also that when separated from her he was vaguely uneasy; an uneasiness that passed only when he found himself once more by her side.

Her vegetarian, votes-for-women, anti-vivisection friends—all frayed his nerves, and all these things in some inexplicable way were entangled with that Circester gathering—with his new-found doubts about Syndicalism, policies and principles—and even with Creegan and the green-eyed girl, whom he had seen occasionally, who jarred him like those other things, but differently. Once or twice he had seen the little whimsical smile coming to him from his audiences, a smile that always drove him into an exaggeration of statement and into a sort of intellectual prickly-heat,

which appeared to amuse her more than ever. However, when he sought her out after the meetings, she had always disappeared.

Perhaps it was all that "neurasthenia of the age" of which his doctor had spoken.

Driven from strength to strength, his only relief was to lose himself in his meetings. In the heart of the mob he found his solace, and in the fact that at last the efforts of Creegan and himself seemed to be bearing fruit. For Syndicalism was undoubtedly progressing amongst the Unions if he were to take his increasing meetings and the reports of the younger men as a guide.

Above all, Creegan pointed to the great strikes of the miners, transport workers, and railwaymen, with the phenomenon of impatience with and even the throwing over of their political leaders as sure evidence of the advance of Syndicalism in Great Britain. They took it all as presage of the triumph to come, not only over the capitalists but over the politicals. (The two were apt to get confused at times.) It was the "Syndicalist Menace" as it was coming to be known, and only the Syndicalist menace, which had forced the Masters to declare themselves outside in the country, instead of playing their favourite game of Socialist-hazing in Parliament. As for the politicals in Parliament, by now they were regarded in all quarters as "tame mice," where they were not accused of downright dishonesty. The employers at any rate did not fear them.

The Syndicalists were much heartened by a series of brilliant articles, sardonic and humorous, appearing in the *Daily Meteor* under the name "Paddy Mac," in which the fatal weaknesses of the politicals were laid bare—the articles deriving much of their sting from the brief editorial announcement that they were written by a Socialist. They were obviously written by a man

with an intimate knowledge of the movement, and had roused the labour leaders to angry expostulation and recrimination, especially as "Paddy Mac" was really supposed to be Kisterling, who by now was at cross-purposes with his party.

Trade Union membership had been lifting fast during the previous year (another proof in Creegan's eyes of the Syndicalist advance), the men's war-chests were now filling once more, and even the Parliamentarians had been girding up their loins and were about to embark upon an all-round 8-Hour Day Campaign. Nasty questions had been asked in Parliament about the administration of certain Boards of Conciliation, and a new spirit, under the stimulus of Syndicalism—at least that was what the Syndicalists said—was showing itself amongst the labour representatives at Westminster. There had been rumours indeed that the Party was divided on tactics, a growing section favouring a more militant policy.

However that might be, Destin knew from his conversations with editors and with some of the political leaders, that Capital was taking fright. There were two or three momentous questions upon which Labour was concentrating more and more—notably the question of "difficult places" for miners, for since the defeat at the Great North-Western Conference the men had been more and more discontented, claiming that as coal was the motive power that drove the machine of the British Empire, they were entitled to special consideration.

There was also an 8-hour day for railwaymen; and above all the question of a sliding-scale standard to keep pace with the ever rising cost of living. The Labour and Socialist papers, and even sometimes the *Olympian's* columns, were filled with lines of figures comparing prices and wages from year to year, which

showed an appalling rise in prices without any corresponding rise in wages.

The Government had even, whilst denying the disparity, promised an investigation, to the indignation both of their own supporters and of the Opposition.

But it was upon "The Right to Work," or "The Right to Live" as it was coming to be known, that Labour was concentrating behind all these other schemes. Labour, in a word, was demanding as its right the provision of work or bread, and it was this outrageous demand which the Masters feared more than anything else, both Opposition and Government combining in the division lobby against an amendment to the King's Speech which had this object in view. It was felt that if this right were once admitted, the whole fabric of the competitive system would be undermined, and it was in order to stave off this demand, and fearing the rising power of Labour, that certain concessions had been made and that both the historic parties were showing an increased tendency to combine against the common enemy—a phenomenon that repeated itself in every European country—when something came to rive the Labour forces as the lightning rives the oak.

XII

THE AGE OF NERVES

To understand the position of Democracy at this time in Europe, with its phenomena at the time of the Great Peril, it is necessary to trace the story of the society of the time—that society which tended more and more to turn upon the grindstone of the labour that lay underneath it.

At this moment, Europe was checkered by paradox—by concentrated riches and intensive, illimitable poverty cheek by jowl—the palace of the millionaire overlooking the slum of the sweated. It was upon this contrast, and especially in Britain, that Creegan and the other Syndicalist leaders fed, declaring that politics and politicians had failed to change anything, and that the incursion of Labour into Parliament had been unable to effect anything, a declaration that was being made by their fellow-Syndicalists in the Latin countries.

It was an age of paradox, in which the newspapers of the day were a strange compound of autocracy and democracy—in which schemes for Social Reform took shape in the midst of enormous power-concentration in the hands of the few, and in which, above a steady undertow of reaction, there flowed in all countries new tides of democracy. Side by side with gargantuan intellectual achievement and the conquest of matter by man, there stood unparalleled degradation of mind and body. Fifty millions of organised democracy in Europe were ranging themselves in face of the inchoate

and non-resisting armies of the submerged and unorganised, led hither and thither by the captains of industry as a counter to the skilled organised workers, upon whom however they were forced to depend for their chief labour-power.

Even in the midst of wars and rumours of wars, peace movements had never been so numerous and so widespread. The Church, in the trappings of democracy, to which it made frantic but unheeded appeal, was engaged in a life-and-death conflict with Science and with Socialism. Paradox was everywhere. The White Race was in the melting-pot.

At this moment, it was Europe's boast that in the domain of intellect she was supreme. Written broadly across her newspapers and her books was the Pride of Brain, of intellectual achievement, at the moment when millions of her peoples were uneducated and unthinking. In the world of science she pointed proudly to the analysis of the atom or the hunting down of the bacillus—in the face of a world where disease was king. In the laboratory, the scientist pursued with blind passion the atom of matter as he pursued the disease germ. In an eternal analysis of the material he saw the salvation of the race and in that analysis won the plaudits of mankind. In the world of industry she boasted the piling up of machine on machine served by the sweating millions whom the machine had mastered, for the European Frankenstein had called into being the Machine, which it could neither control nor stop. The Machine had mastered the Man.

In the world of literature, her writers pointed with pride to imaginative deserts from which the Idea of God had been banished, and through the thunders from the pulpits of the priests of the Prince of Peace, there came the trial crash of ingenious and powerful instruments of slaughter, upon which she spent more than half

the total of her expenditure upon all the other things of life, goading her democracies into growling, guttural, and sullen discontent.

The Europe of the day—the Europe of paradox—was a Europe in which the triumph of matter was complete.

The triumph of man over matter had become the triumph of matter over man—the triumph of death over life.

The reverse of this triumph of intellect to the exclusion of the ideal was found in the story of a Europe which had rapidly become a Europe of insanity and nervous decadence. It was as though a stage had been reached in the cold development of intellect to the exclusion of the spiritual, when, with the decay of the intuitive faculties, nerve-madness had supervened. It was as though the intellectual process, unvitalised by the spiritual, ceasing to be a bridge from the instinct of the lower animals to the intuition of man, had blinded itself in a *cul de sac* of matter, something especially true of the Teuton.

Even the democratic movements of the times found their chief expression in material terms, not only in theory as in what was called "the materialist conception of history," but in objective—the goal of democracy, nominally at least, being a food goal and its politics bread and butter politics, hiding the real spirit of democracy, which was something quite other.

The leading specialists of Europe stood in appalled curiosity at the waves of insanity which swept over her face. In Great Britain alone the ratio of the known insane had doubled itself within the hand-span of fifty years. Every European country showed this mounting Tower of Babel.

But outside the known insane, there stood in gibbering horror an ever-increasing mass of the imbecile and half-witted. Whole communities and all classes were

impregnated with the seeds of madness—with that half-madness which eluded the madhouse because it was "harmless." The cities of the continent had become forcing houses for madness, something which crystallised itself in the saying of an international authority —"It is difficult to say who is mad and who not."

And the thing that stood behind this, the great breeder of madness, was the frenzied competition of the day. Europe had found her god in the god of Competition—a Janus-god with faces of "liberty of the subject" and "individualism." The age was one of nerve-racking competition; a lustful, passionless competition for gold and power, with "speeding-up" as its stimulant. In the ever-rising tide of democracy, the struggle was for power—power—power, for even the democracies had learned their lesson from their Masters—perhaps too well. They were nervous, or "jumpy" as it was called in the new labour-jargon which was developing.

Looking over the industrial fields of the Europe of that day, one saw only the turning, twisting, thrusting of wheels and cranks—heard only the thunder of those giant machines which, nearly automatic themselves, developing their own brain, had turned the workers who waited on them into automata. For in that age, as has been said, the Machine had conquered the Man who created it.

One saw men, women, and children toiling hopelessly, helplessly, caught in the cogs of this competition where all things were crushed and torn in the battle for the markets. The working-classes of Europe, not only in the increasing, breeding, fermenting slums of the great cities, but in the hovels of the countryside, were living in a fœtid squalor which had ceased to impress. One saw the clash of Labour and Capital—the era of great strikes and great combines—the tearing, whirling,

grinding of millstone against millstone, and between, the tender bodies of the women and children.

The leading sociologists of the time, where unfettered, declared after exhaustive analysis that despite the boast of Euorpean civilisation, the standard of her common life had declined and was declining — that democracy was inexorably falling backwards into the abyss from which through the ages it had with such effort emerged. In the schools of Europe, more than half of the children of the people were found to be physically or mentally defective, bred from malnutrition and from two other far-reaching and still only half-suspected causes.

For the thing that stood behind all this nerve-madness and physical decadence—the great breeder of decadence, was Vice, the inevitable reaction from the madness of competition, in which forgetfulness and counter-irritant were sought. In Europe at that time "the vice of sex" dragged itself across everything—across the pavements of her streets—across the pages of her literature—across the whole of her social life. It was found in the music-hall as in the "picture palace" — the haunts of the over-driven democracy of that time—its results in the hospital as in the asylum. A Vice Commission, called into being in momentary terror of the thing, had declared that at one period or another of their lives the great mass of European males in the cities at least suffered from sexual disease. It was read, wondered at, and forgotten.

In the most fundamental, the most delicate, of all realms—the realm of sex, romance had been thrust out for sensuality and the intercourse of the spirit for the intercourse of the flesh. Matter was supreme.

With the sexual vice was enmeshed the places of the lower deeps—the place of the opium den and the

chloral fiend, or the nameless wastes of the unnatural, though these places as yet had been reserved for the Masters rather than for the Masses. In every consulting room of her cities, in their medical literature, was to be found the story of the drug fiend. The victim of competition found in drugs the momentary forgetfulness he craved.

And moving around and through all this was the bath of alcohol in which the European democracies, like their masters, steeped themselves. From the man of social position to the worker in the factory, alcohol was regarded as the great stimulant to work or genius —the sedative of nerve—the killer of worry. True that democracy rising to power had begun to realise the necessity of clearheadedness for the work before it and through its temperance movements was seeking to stem the alcoholic flood. But despite that, Europe's gaols, hospitals, and lunatic asylums were filled to the doors with the subjects of King Alcohol. Alcohol was king—the Mad King. For the nerves of overdriven Europe had to be satiated.

But out of the universal decay were springing the flowers of the new democracy. It was thus that life came out of death—in classes as in nations; in nations as in races; in races as in worlds. It was the Spring-Song of the Eternal, finding its expression in the rising of the sap of democracy, rising through the tree of life.

Throughout Europe there were springing up in little local communities men and women who, sometimes almost inaudible, sometimes unconscious of the part they were playing in the rising of democracy, were making their protest in their day against the materialism of the time. Unknown these—the pioneers of the future—they did their work, and when they had done it, passed into oblivion. Unheralded they

came—unhonoured and unsung they laid down their earth-work and passed onwards.

Passing from these local communities, one found in the wider field of the city or county or province other and stronger spirits, coordinating the work of those others, who, giving it new inspiration, sent it forward to a greater stage, where it was taken up by men and women who were national figures, who in their turn cooperated with men and women of their kind across the frontiers of the nations, developing what was shaping itself into an international protest of Democracy against materialism throughout the White Continent. Now these movements were passing from the White even to the Brown and Yellow Continents.

What was especially noticeable at this time was that despite the materialist form of the democratic propaganda, there was a steady tendency, and particularly in Great Britain, for the movements of Democracy to take a religious basis. Democracy was fast becoming a new world-religion, with a central principle taking the place of those other religions with a concrete, anthropomorphic God, which it was displacing, whilst absorbing in its heart the foundation of all those other religions, divorced from dogma.

It was to be noticed that the main pivots upon which all these multitudinous movements were turning were two—one the Religious, the other the Social; which, under the hammer blows of democracy, in their turn were shown to be but two aspects of the one central axis.

The European, with his passion for anarchy in thought, had effectually pigeon-holed his various activities. He had divorced Religion from Science—Conduct from Business—and, in particular, Ethics from Politics. It was this last which had aroused a

blind protest from Democracy, which, in the spiral of time, under the new impulse, was swinging round to the synthetic. It was the Age of Synthesis—the age of the Breaking Down of Barriers—physical, mental, spiritual.

The turning movement which had begun had a curious fascination—it was the movement of the birth of a new world from the womb of time—a movement in which Democracy was the midwife of the new Society.

And it was especially in the guise of Social Reform—the war-cry of the new politics—that the new society was showing itself. In the communities, the democracy was developing a passion for social reform, was shedding the old individualism as a worn-out garment, and was taking in its place the garment of cooperation, finding in it the new individualism—an individualism which developed self by selflessness and found its kingship in service.

The town councillor, whether Latin, Teuton, or Anglo-Saxon, was finding a new meaning to such commonplace things as lighting, paving, and sanitation. The material was seen to be the matrix of the spirit. He was beginning to recognise that the slum produces the slum mind, and that, to use one of the commonest sayings of the time, "the body was the temple of the soul." In such sayings the path of the new democracy had its milestones.

In every political party in Europe, questions of party-policy and party-advantage were giving way to questions of Social Reform, which was becoming the goal, real or affected, of all parties.

And through all these bread and butter politics there came again and again the cry of the new democracy—the cry for brotherhood, for understanding. "We are sick of national and international jealousies—throw

down the barriers! Let us not work for ourselves alone, but for mankind—throw down the barriers!" Vague yesterday, the cry was taking form out of the European void; was formulating its demands with clearness and decision; was becoming the fury at the feast of materialism. It would not be stifled. It was the voice of the new synthesis.

Wherever this voice made itself heard, the masters of mankind cowered before it. They fed it with honeyed words—they stopped their ears—but still the terrible call came to them, beating through the closed doors of conscience. It was the voice of Democracy, but it was also the voice of Religion—the new religion —the Religion of International Democracy.

XIII

THE BIG DRUM

It looked as though Democracy had entered upon its last triumphant march to power. It was stretching its tentacles over the face of the world. Its combinations had spread from city to province, from province to nation, and now were becoming International. Already in Great Britain, the transport workers, including the dockers and railwaymen, with the miners were federated for combined action against the masters. Trouble with one Union, nay with one man, meant trouble with two millions of men and the paralysis of society. "All for each—and each for all!" was the slogan of the new trades unionism.

Creegan and Destin were jubilant. In these new combinations they saw the coming of Syndicalism—felt the certainty of future victory. Yet these combinations so far showed no signs of throwing political action overboard. After the strikes of the previous years there had come the reaction, and already the men were being rounded up into the sheepfolds of politics. Yet, despite this labour paradox, there could be no question that democracy was getting more impatient year by year. The postal workers had threatened a national strike and had not hesitated to pit themselves against the Government. These educated proletarians had now banded themselves together into a Postal Federation of six unions, whilst a still bigger combination was taking form in the Civil

Service, which had now thirteen Unions federated including the Postal Federation itself.

The men were really driving their leaders before them. The snobbishness of the caste unionism, which in the past had cut off the aristocracy of the highly skilled trades from their fellows, was ceasing to exist.

And now the Transport Workers, the Postmen, and the Miners had passed national bounds and were linked up into International organisations which had their headquarters in two of the chief continental cities.

It was the logical sequence of democracy's awakening. All barriers, national and otherwise, were being swept aside.

Capital, frightened, was organising itself apace. Combination called combination into being automatically. In Great Britain there were at this time over one thousand men's Unions, but as Destin had discovered in an analysis he had taken out, there were almost exactly the same number of employers' Unions. In answer to the war-chests of new and combined democracy, an Employers' Defence Union had been formed, which was raising a fifty million pound war-chest to fight the men; like them, having for its motto—"All for each—and each for all." In this combine nearly four thousand firms were linked up for common action. It was even seeking to steer the ship of state itself, for one of the first demands in its constitution was that it should be consulted by Parliament before any fresh Trade Union legislation was undertaken.

Now the International combinations of the Men were being met by International combinations of the Masters, for all International jealousies of competition were going down in the welter of the Big Idea. The Shipping Trust had linked together the shipowners of Great Britain, Germany, France, Austro-Hungary,

Russia, and Holland, and were negotiating with the owners of the United States. In their hands they held the shipping of Europe and the lives of five millions of human beings directly or indirectly. Already, understandings, shadowy at the moment, were materialising between the Governments of Europe for dealing with the rising of the red tide. There were now two Internationals—the Red and the Yellow—the Men and the Masters.

Yet despite all the master-combinations, it seemed as though each blow of the hammers of capitalism welded democracy still more strongly together. Over a million men in Britain had been stampeded into the Unions in one year under the threat of the new combines. Every combine of the Masters called forth a fresh combine of the Men. In Germany as in Great Britain and the other countries, democracy still climbed steadily to political power, holding over the head of society the sword of the General Strike. Democracy seemed unstoppable.

Then there came the little cloud.

It was a cloud no bigger than a man's hand. Europe had held herself in strained silence for half a century, save for the rumblings of the little volcanic middle states. The deadly order of war ranged itself along the frontiers of the States of Christendom—behind it, the furnaces of Moloch glaring the night skies, whilst Princes in Shining Armour, persuaded of their mission of divinity, stalked silently in the noonday, rattling the sword inconsequently in the scabbard to prove to Europe and themselves their preparedness. Behind them, the mass of the democracies had learned to forget —had developed, often in blind unconsciousness, the spirit not so much of anti-nationalism as that of Internationalism.

In vain had the apostles of nationalism appealed

to the feeling of race. The links of the chain of Democracy had been and were being forged, linking country with country. The White labour organisations, tending nationally to more intimate cohesion, had passed as inevitably as the formation of a crystal to International understandings. "The Big Idea" was in the air. Even the scarce-breathing democracy of the Yellow and Brown men was reaching out its browned hands to the White democracy for deliverance from the womb of the travailing East.

In vain had the captains of industry and war appealed forcefully, often genuinely to "patriotism," "religion," and "Imperialism." Stupefied but unconvinced, the world-democracies watched in dumb surprise and indifference the empires in the making of which they had no part but which seemed to have grown as unconsciously as the giant fungus of a night. The average Briton could not have replied to the simplest questions as to the geography and ethnography of the British Empire. The material German, despite a more conscious, perhaps more theatrical, pride, was still more concerned with questions of daily bread and internal administration than with Togoland or the malaria-infested regions of the Germany overseas. Teutonic dreams of a great South American Empire left him cold. Beer and bread he asked, or, as it was coming to be known under the rising poesy of democracy—"Bread and Roses."

Democracy in the Latin countries had been drifting to anarchism—to direct action—and, above all, to anti-militarism. It was the passion of the southern races, impatient of restraint, of the slowness of political advance. For the previous decade, the Confédération Général du Travail in France, like its counterparts in Italy, had been challenging force with force, trampling militarism, and with it, nationalism, in the

dust, and saw in the red *culotte* of the soldier of the Republic the badge of licensed butchery.

At the antipodes, on the limits of Empire, the democracy of the Englishman had forgotten its Imperialism in the economic battle and had climbed triumphantly to power. New Zealand, fresh from a quarter of a century of democratic womanhood, turned a deaf ear to the Scarlet Piper.

In the other corner of Empire, Dutchmen and Englishmen were breaking down the barriers of race-hatred in a common effort against a common enemy. The South African continent had been torn by the labour war in which the Big Stick had been used unsparingly by the joint captains of English and Dutch capitalism, who, in the furnace of the labour struggle, had melted the hates of yesterday.

In the New World as in the Old, changes both in policies and principles had been taking place. The American Federation of Labour, prime antagonist of independent labour representation, had been gradually yielding to the newer voice—to the voice of labour militant. Its chief, the Hebrew who led his millions as his prototype led the Children of Israel through the deserts of the past, was being challenged by younger and stronger men. The spirit of patriotism appealed to in the North American Continent by Big Business failed to resurrect itself in the minds of the sons of the Republic. Neither a big navy nor a big army nor the appeal of the Big Stick had been able to woo or force the inheritance of the White Domination.

The White Race was urgent for democracy. The little man at the street corner, like the historian of the time, spoke with the Big Idea running through his speech. The Fleet Street penny-a-liner, catching the infection, dipped his pen in the ocean and wrote

of cataclysms and tidal waves and revolution. The journals of a conservative yesterday forgot themselves and spoke vaguely of Social Reform—of "the spirit of the time," and the need for new democratic programmes. In the same issue the current of past controversy ran side by side with the newer current of democratic thought.

The age, full of contradiction, reflected itself in the press—self-contradiction became, unnoticed, the commonplace of the day.

The older political parties were being metamorphosed in all countries. Brushed forward by the drive of the new democracy, the Liberal Parties of all lands found themselves compelled to reach out to sweeping reforms, or at least to pretend to reach out to them, even sometimes to ally themselves incestuously with the Labour Parties. Their historic opponents in all countries showed new tendencies, confused, contradictory, now inclined to fuse with the more conservative of the Liberals—now tending to develop new and democratic programmes of their own.

The parliaments of the world, at least in the more democratic countries, were fast developing into auction marts where party auctioneers with big voices and enraged imagination, declaimed to the public the merits of the goods in the shop-window. "Window-dressing" became an accepted phrase in the political vernacular of the time and was regarded as a legitimate performance.

And behind, Demos, insatiable. The watchdogs of democracy having tasted power, ever demanded more. "Sops to Cerberus" became the engrossment of the politician, who now began to find that no longer could Demos be satisfied with machine-changes of administration—dazzled by promises—but clamoured for one thing, and only one thing, Bread. Now he was even

demanding Roses, asking engarlandment to crown his new-found power-drunkenness. . . .

* * * * *

Away in the spaces of middle Europe there came the tap of a drum. In a moment, the nerves of Europe had tautened, expectant. The drum-tap echoed across the barriers of the nations. A single beat. Then a silence.

Autocracy, its eyes bloody, sat up, waiting.

Democracy, self-satisfied, set itself down again to peaceful capture of power by orderly progress. Complacently, it looked upon its International understandings—its growing voting power—the failure of its enemies to dam back the red flood. But again there came the beat of the drum—beaten from one of the little peevish middle states—a state of no importance. But this time the drum-beat came sharper, ever sharper, in the staccato of anger.

In a moment the armies of Europe had stiffened to attention before the blinded eyes of the Democracy. The sun set redly upon the gleam of bayonet. Democracy was aroused.

Under the iron heel of Moloch the proletariats ran hither and thither in the ant-heap of Europe. Meetings sprang up in a night—meetings of protest—meetings that screamed incoherently whilst the sword rang from the scabbard—that could scarce be heard over the rattle of the drum which was rising, ever rising. In every European capital, democracy, protesting, inchoate, murmured in generalities against the war-Moloch. But still that terrible drum beat insistently on its ears, stifling, drowning.

In brute indifference, the war beast clambered out of chaos. The captains of red battle, ready from a boot strap to a shell, smiled contemptuous at the protest of impotent democracy, which without war policy,

without leadership, found itself drowning in the beat of the drum, which had now risen into a litany of hell, through which the priests intoned their prayers for victory to their national gods.

And through it all the crashing of national boundary, the breaking of treaty, the ruthless crushing of a little people, came to the ear of puzzled democracy.

The armies of Europe were moving on the frontiers. The brassy call of Moloch went forth to helpless democracy, demanding cannon food. And still the drums of war raised their horrid cadence, pounding out reason and thought.

Then the Democracy, blinded with anger against the Masters of War, began to "see red." Confused by the beating of drum and the blare of trumpet; blinded by the gleam of weapon; remembering old lessons long since forgotten, the traditions of ten thousand years rose up and sent the blood beating headlong through its arteries.

In a flash, the levelled barriers had been erected. Europe was a series of closed fastnesses from the ramparts of which the flags of nationhood reared themselves, as the red flag of revolution fluttered downwards. The International was being pounded to fragments under the beating of the big drum.

And now, the beating of the drum was mingled with the crack of rifle and the dice-box rattle of machine gun on the frontiers as the nations grappled.

The world was to learn its lesson—the lesson that the tie of the country was the closest, most indissoluble, of all ties—closer than that of parent and child—of friend and friend—of husband and wife. Love of country was greater than love of woman.

The thing that men called "patriotism"—something unrealised, intangible, yesterday, became to-day the only reality. It needed the Internationalism of the

time to bring it out—the red, white and blue of the tricolour and of the Union Jack and the eagles of Slav and Teuton limning themselves against the scarlet of the International. The International had to learn its lesson over again.

This was the rising of that other red tide, lifting as the other sank. The call of the blood was more insistent than the call of the race. It was against civilisation as against ethic. It flaunted itself in the face of religion as in the face of the intellect. It was Intuition—the intuition of the Stone Age—of primitive tribal man—that intuition which passes all barriers, reaching back through the mists of the years to the fount of life itself—that intuition which marked the first differentiation, the first individualism, of the race —something as impalpable as the rays of the sun or the mists of the morning and as powerful, as all-pervading.

At this call, the husband forgot his wife and child—the priest forgot his robes. The mother forgot her child—the harlot her trade. The scholar forgot his philosophy—the theologian his God.

The dude of yesterday became the warrior of to-day who "scorned delights and lived laborious days." The pasty clerk, who yesterday trembled at his master's voice, stood to-day unmoved where the high-explosive burst in the red mist of death. The man of millions flung down his money bags and sought death at a crown a day. The epicure who yesterday fumed at his caviare and Chablis, to-day munched his stinking "tommy" with joy. Editors threw down their pens and took up the sword. Dukes donned overalls in the workshops of the nation and took their wages meekly. Nations found their souls in sacrifice.

The traditions of the centuries were in the melting-pot of Moloch, something then unsuspected, and only

realised when in the months that followed, politicians wiped out competition with a sweep of the arm; the Master had his profits limited by law; and the State controlled the factory with its master and its man—body and soul and bench, to secure national efficiency. It was only in the long afterward that the-man-in-the-street sensed dimly the new world created by the genius of war, when the newspapers called for the institution of Socialism—for Democracy in being—a democracy in which duke and dustman, king and coal-heaver were but units in the national machine; demanding a roll-call for national service—for co-operation—the roll-call that was to have preceded the Cooperative Commonwealth of the Socialist dream—now to usher in the Commonwealth of War.

Democracy destroyed Democracy — national democracy, international. This was that other red democracy—the democracy of war. It was the final paradox.

In vain did Creegan and Destin now, in the first days of war, try to make head against the rising storm. In vain did they and their fellows raise their voices above the scream of the maddened crowds. The beating of the drum drowned them — and left them. The Syndicalists of yesterday, the arch-militarists, became the frantic nationalists of the day. Not only in the Latin but in the Teutonic and Anglo-Saxon countries, their leaders had flung themselves into the firing line, yielding up their lives with a smile on their lips and hatred in their hearts. In a week, the work of a hundred years had gone down.

Creegan, broken, despairing, sulking, turned his back on the movement. The leaders of Democracy who still held to their Internationalism hung their heads and felt that all was over. The Internationalists of yesterday who had declared that the International was

greater than the nation, now branded the dwindling minority against the war as traitors, and like Herodias of old demanded their heads on a charger.

The barriers of class as of caste went down under the drum-beat. Liberal, Conservative, and Socialist occupied the same platform — their presses gave the same message, urging the masses of workers to fight in the cause of culture and civilisation against their fellows, who in other countries listened eagerly to a like appeal. "Culture and Civilisation" became the battle-cry of the European democracies as Internationalism had been the day before.

Destin, for the moment broken under the stroke of fortune, after the first rush was past, lifted his head again. The brutal, stubborn, persistent spirit rose once more in him as it had always risen. Defying the authorities and the people of the time, he threw himself into the tiny movement which was trying to make headway against the tide of war. Now hounded at the street corner, now threatened with prosecution, travelling through the length and breadth of the country, he found around him a nucleus of pacifists who refused to be pacific.

He was now the real head of the remnants of the Syndicalist movement, which however for the moment was linking itself with the little band of politicals and even of Liberals who had taken up the anti-war attitude. His name, known fitfully in the previous years, again loomed on the posters of Fleet Street—in irony—in condemnation—in frank contempt. He was held up before the nation as Creegan had once been held up, as the incarnation of helpless democracy. In the same column was laid to his door the lives now flying out on the frontier. He it was who was stopping the quick progress of the war. He it was who made it impossible for England to be victorious over her

enemies. He became the Jesus Christ of the anti-militarist movement. The people who followed him were cranks and dreamers. Even democracy itself condemned them. But Destin, over all, was the despised of the people. He had no power, yet he was accredited with limitless power. Always demanding a concrete figure, the Anglo-Saxon mind saw in him the head and front of the offending.

Now he was blasphemously trying to make anti-militarism a kind of religion. He was preaching that all war was murder, to the slogan of the new faith—"War against War!" In vain was it thrown at him contemptuously that the arch-apostle of French anti-militarism had surrendered to patriotism and was now in the firing line—in vain were the anti-militarists of the Slav races shown also to have forgotten an academic Internationalism in the call of country and civilisation. Destin held his way, not a little dismayed and not a little proud. He also was a crucified one.

Yet he had his moments of depression when all seemed useless.

There was the day in Hyde Park where, despite police regulation, the Syndicalists had called a war protest meeting and where droves of inflamed young men had turned up "to see the fun," where Destin found himself facing a whitey bobbing mass of faces, all agog and slavering with playful cruelty. He looked so impotent there in the heat of the summer afternoon that even the constables, whose helmets dotted the crowd, forebore to interfere.

At this time Destin was exhausted. His face, whitened and drawn, showed the story of the previous month. His nerves were fighting mad. Cool enough generally, he had, as Wildish put it, "gone past himself."

As he faced the mass of faces, the old sureness of Trafalgar Square was gone, and in its place, for the first time in his life, there was fear of the brute before him, mingled with a sort of madness to throw himself into the jaws of the animal and have it over. Hitherto he had always controlled the mob—now for the first time like a wild beast tamer who has lost his nerve, he felt that it was beginning to control him.

Wildish was to be the other speaker, but at the hour of the meeting, Wildish had not come, and as he knew, Wildish with his fearlessness and humour was the one man in England who could finish a difficult dangerous meeting of this kind satisfactorily. That meant at least half an hour's holding of the brute at bay, for he well knew he could not depend upon police protection. His meeting was lawless. He was outside the law.

As the time went on, and the clamour around him rose under the heat of the sun, his eye vainly searched the gates of the Marble Arch for his colleague. His thoughts began to wander. In a moment the crowd before him had sensed his impotence, and the ironical cheers had turned into jeers with an undertone of something else. Destin smiled down at them, but it was no longer his old serene smile, but a flurried, harried contortion.

Then, as the growl of the crowd had risen to a snarl, he caught sight of Wildish, who was forcing his way through the crowd at the side of the platform. The crowd at that moment began to sway—to sway in the sickly movement he knew so well—the sway before the rush. It was at this moment that he held himself up to a supreme effort, determining to finish the meeting then and there. Already he had checked the movement beneath him, when he felt himself dragged backwards. There was a scream in his ears

and a dense mass of bodies, soft and steamy, with hoofs hard and crushing, passed over him.

He struggled for a moment and then was conscious of an opening in the crowd whilst a space gradually cleared itself about him. It was in this moment, struggling to hold his senses, that he was dragged to his feet and heard coming from above him a clear strong voice.

Standing on the platform, her head bared, stood the Green-eyed Girl, her eyes flashing surely upon the crowd beneath, which was gathering itself for another rush. In burning, clear, accents, the brogue came strongly to him—"Is it men that ye call yourselves? Perhaps you would try and rush a woman? Perhaps you would like to push me off the platform and trample me in the dust of the earth. You dirty, pitiful cowards!"

The crowd was moving uneasily.

"Come on, you cowards!" came the voice over his head. The slender boyish figure had drawn itself up, the little hands clenched surely, on the platform edge until the knuckles stood out whitely. The crowd was silent. It was moving, but this time away from the platform, whilst through it passed the levers of constables with their irresistible—"Move on there—move on there."

Somebody took him outside the Marble Arch gates to a taxi-cab. He found himself sitting opposite the Green-eyed Girl, her face white as his own. The taxi pulled up quickly. In a dream he passed into his room and saw himself in the glass, his coat flapping downwards where it had been torn, a thin stream of blood hardening at the corner of his mouth. He sat there stupidly, alone.

The door opened. The girl came into the room, a little drawn, her mouth tightened, but the eyes shining green and quenchless as ever.

He did not think of offering her his thanks, though he knew it was she who had taken the platform at the critical moment, holding the crowd until the police could get to work.

"This is the end," he said, smiling sadly at her.

"No," said she, "it is the beginning," and she smiled back at him inscrutably.

His bleeding mouth and blackened eyes she ignored as something that was part of the struggle—inevitable and not to be talked about.

"What are you going to do now?" she asked.

"What can I do? What can any of us do? Creegan is sulking—we are without a head—without beginning and without end. I don't even know that we trust ourselves. The nationalists have been too strong for us. Even the Government doesn't bother its head about us—we are too weak and contemptible." He threw out his hands despairingly.

"So that is how you take it?" she said.

He looked into the eyes that looked at his. And as he looked he saw humour, contempt, assuredness—all running through the greens and yellows—for two tiny spots of yellow had come into them.

"What!" he said. "Do you mean to say that you haven't given up hope?"

"Given up hope? What do you mean? I never had any. You remember what I said to you the first day we met—'The democracy is mad, and good and bad and weak, and the surest thing in the world and the most uncertain.'"

"What do you think now?"

"I think, when this war has spent itself, and the blood-spilling has cleared the brains of Demos, there is going to be a recoil. I think the swing of the pendulum must come, and that there will be men's work for men and women's work for women. At least, as

you know, every woman's proletarian organisation in Europe has kept its head and declared against war. There has been no exception. We are living in the age of woman, and woman is coming to her own after the war."

The boyish figure was leaning forward, with a tiny wrinkle between the broad clear brows and the high forehead.

"But that time is not yet," she added.

"Will you help me?" he asked.

"I will always help you if you will let me," she said simply.

She had drawn closer to him and looked into his eyes strangely—fleetingly.

He looked back at her steadfastly. It was as though he had heard the echo of something in her voice—a lesson learned long since and forgotten. It was the echo of bells in a far-off summer evening—of many things half-remembered. There came to him the feeling that all this had happened before, somewhere, long ago—as though he had passed through the magic door of yesterday.

But in that moment of passing, it was as if a veil had been drawn away and he saw that the girl was wondrous fair. He had always thought of her as an "intellectual," and though never unfeminine, still something hard and boyish. Now he caught the soft flush of the ivory skin—the eyes and mouth that had softened and the beauty of the red-black hair that framed the face—the face of a woman he had not seen before. Even the lines of the figure had softened, and the gentle rounded bosoms showed themselves faintly under the stuff of the close fitting dress.

The woman that stood before him, her lips parted, was another woman to the woman who had so often angered him and whom he had distrusted and even hated.

He was about to rise to his feet, curious of this new revelation, wondering and confused, searching the face of the girl before him for the thread of the forgotten lesson, when there was a movement of silk and something had thrown itself at his feet.

In that moment the thread of memory was broken.

It was Vesta Craven who, finding the outer door open, had entered unannounced.

"My poor Denis. . . ." The voice came with a thrill underneath it. Destin stared at the fresh, sweet figure—stupified.

"I heard all about it in the Park. I came to the meeting late and . . . er . . . Mr. Wildish told me, so I hurried here straight away. Have they broken you up badly?"

The rounded arms, the lace sleeves falling back to the elbows, were resting on his knees; the eyes, intent, glancing upwards appealingly.

Destin was confused, for he knew that the girl had not seen the Green-eyed Girl standing there in the corner behind the door, a queer little smile on her lips—the old, mocking smile which always puzzled and grated on him.

"Oh it's nothing," he grunted. "There is . . . er . . . I don't think you have met before. . . ." He stood up awkwardly to make the introduction.

Miss Craven had risen to her feet in graceful self-possession. She turned around and met the face of the Green-eyed Girl, which was now expressionless. The little mocking smile had fled. The two girls searched each other out like two fencers about to engage. Miss Craven made a step forward with a half gesture to hold out her hand, corrected herself, and bowed a little stiffly. The other girl might or might not have bowed.

Destin was angry—angry with Vesta Craven—he did

not know why, but especially angry with the Green-eyed Girl, who, dash it all! might remember her manners. There was no need to insult Vesta, who at least had expressed some sympathy with him in his damaged condition. He had not thought of it before.

"You will let me get some water and bandages . . . Denis?" She lingered a moment on the name, which she spoke like a challenge.

Miss Craven's eye was a little hard—her old sureness a little forced.

Destin was about to refuse, but already she had gone to the bell and called the landlady, with whom she disappeared, after first glancing at the other girl.

"Dash it all!" said Destin a little rudely—"you might be polite to her. . . . She means well," he added half apologetically, as he caught the smile in the other's face.

"She means too well," said the Green-eyed Girl. "That is the trouble."

"Surely you're not . . ." he was going to say "jealous" but the word sounded too brutal and intimate, so he changed it for "angry"—"surely you're not angry because a friend acts the angel of mercy?"

"It is because she acts the angel of mercy that I don't care about her," said the girl with simple directness. It was that occasional baffling directness which so often non-plussed and angered him.

She was putting on her hat.

"You know my trouble is that I am not sympathetic enough. Miss Craven will see to your wounds—it is her mission in life."

She walked out of the room after nodding coolly and a little sadly to Destin, who by now was very angry. He half followed her to the door, but checked himself as it closed in his face.

After all, she could go. She always unsatisfied him. Why couldn't she be a little feminine—he was going to say "womanly," but somehow that did not seem to fit her.

Vesta Craven came in, her sleeves rolled back, the landlady's apron caught behind picturesquely. She seemed nervous as she entered, but recovered herself.

As she made him take off his torn coat and collar in frank comradeship, and bathed his face and neck over a basin, and bound up a rather deep wound on his head after washing it, Destin felt unbearably angry —and a brute. After all, the girl was doing what she could. Yet the touch of her cool fingers repelled him—once they thrilled him.

But as the process of washing and bandaging went on, he felt the old thrill come back again. There was that fragrance which enveloped him, which seemed to come from her body. The touch of the slender dexterous fingers was cool and grateful.

As she bent down close to his head to examine the knot she had made, in a fit of impulse he drew the dainty, proud little head down on his shoulder and kissed the soft, cool cheek.

"Did you mean that . . . Denis?" Vesta's voice had never sounded like that before.

Something passed before his eyes—something blinding but intoxicating. He surrendered himself to it.

"Of course I meant it," he said.

XIV

THE DIVINE RIGHT

THINGS were happening inside the Trade Unions.

At the beginning of the war, unemployment rose fraction by fraction. The unemployment money poured out. Day by day the officials saw the golden stream go without any return.

War, the highwayman, was holding a pistol to the head of Demos and demanding not only his money but his life, for the Trades Unionists, who were the backbone of England's new armies, were being shot down like pheasants in the *battues* of the frontier.

Destin drove this home with all his force. This was what war brought the democracy. War meant the death of organised labour. Would it not come out of its nightmare and see that the enemy was inside, not outside, its gates? Already, the man despised the day before was beginning to be heard, when there was a transformation.

The mounting figures of unemployment were held. Then they began to decline, until, as Destin himself knew from the statistics of thirteen of the principal unions of the country, in eleven of them there was scarcely a man out of work. It was only the "luxury trades" which were hard hit.

The thing was incomprehensible. It pricked the balloon of Socialist economics.

As he began to look into the causes, it burst upon

him that with the volunteering for battle of hundreds of thousands of workers who were withdrawn from the labour market, more work was left for those behind. Then the war contracts began to pour in. Powder, steel, food, khaki—all had to be provided for the men at the front, and the wear and tear of war had to be made good. Every time a British battleship was sent to the bottom it meant high wages in the unconscious ranks of the Engineers and Shipbuilders, for it had to be replaced, and replacement meant work. The shipyards were working day and night. War was proving, as the militarists had always said, a blessing, not a curse.

In vain did Destin try to make headway with his peace propaganda. He was laughed to scorn. There were the facts—in the face of the facts, those facts always beloved of the democracy, he was powerless. Everybody was laughing at him—his audiences—the police, who treated him with tolerant and smiling good-nature.

Democracy was even being officially recognised through war, for a Coalition Government of all parties had been formed, in which the plums of office had been thrown to the Labour leaders. The truce which had been concluded between Capital and Labour, every day grew more permanent. The Unions had now voluntarily abandoned "the right to strike," after consultation with the Government chiefs, who had taken Labour into their confidence in a series of joint conferences. Some of the labour leaders had even agreed to a sort of compulsory labour on war munitions, enforced by a semi-military control, and were now dallying with conscription.

"God Save the King" had been sung in the House of Commons, led by a one-time irreconcilable labour leader, and as the casualties continued to roll up from the Continental battlefields, the blood spilled flowed

over friend and foe alike, fusing them in a common baptism—the baptism of blood. Labour leaders gave their sons to the war, and with each sacrifice in a common cause eroded the landmarks of class. Were they not fighting for democracy itself?

One of them, a prominent pacifist and lay preacher in the temples of Nonconformity, had made the famous "Graves of our Forefathers" speech, in which, the tears streaming down his cheeks, standing as he said, upon the graves of his fighting ancestors, he called down vengeance upon the common enemy, and demanded compulsory military service and the ending of the class-war.

The thrash of the drum went on. The war-storm had not yet reached its full height. As call after call was made by the war-captains for more men, demonstrations of patriotism, ever more intense, arose. It was at this time that the sign—"More Men Wanted!" appeared in a certain street of infamy, in the bedroom windows of those nationless women, who, like their sisters, found themselves swept up by the common flood of patriotism.

But the appetite of the War-Moloch grew as it fed. Things that had once been men were now coming back to fill the highways and byeways of England. In the grave of the near front, arms and legs protruded from the distended earth, flatulent and noisome. But still the cry came—"More Men Wanted!"

Compulsory Service was in the air. Even some of the labour leaders, the anti-conscriptionists of yesterday, now urged conscription—though they side-stepped the name. At last the measure was swept through Parliament. For the demand was still for "More Men!"

When the war-wave had topped its height, breaking whitely upwards in the night that was gathering over Europe, and Destin was at last beginning to lose all

hope, silenced in the thunders of the guns and of the big drum, War, the dramatist, loosed his curtain.

It was at the moment when the lines of men writhed serpent-like in a death-grapple on the frontiers, and when the war looked like continuing indefinitely, that something snapped away back there in the welter. At the moment when the struggle seemed interminable, and the exhausted peoples were putting forth still greater and final efforts, gold, not steel, decided the war.

Europe was hushed. The boom of the last gun died away in the graveyard of the Continent, echoing over the valleys and plains where a whitened hand raised itself despairing from its half-dug grave as though to stop the carnage. The armies of Europe sank down exhausted.

Then it was discovered that the war had settled nothing. It had bound a tyranny, but it had loosed a brood of new problems to be fought out in future wars. The peace terms were signed. A pæan of praise ascended from the churches, drowning the voiceless chorus of the widowed and fatherless.

The armies of men poured back to the blare of trumpet and waving of flag. Then they looked around them and went into the labour market for their work.

But the work was not there.

The commercial machine had stopped under the stresses of war. In vain did the hungry millions clamour for work and bread. There was no work and no bread. The Government, already warned of the danger, put into operation some half-hearted schemes of relief. But still the chorus came, insistent—"We want bread—we want work!"

Dumb, fearing, the heads of Government held themselves silent before the rising appeal. The workless had now taken fire. The waves of rebellion had lapped the

Trade Unions and passed over them. Millions were out of work. Millions were demanding bread.

It was the chance of the Syndicalists. Creegan came out from his hibernation under the warm rays of the rising sun of rebellion, his lethargy gone, aflame and impatient.

The papers as a whole were silent. Not so the *Meteor*, which flamed through the newspaper firmament, astonishing friend and foe by its espousal of the cause of Labour, and picturesquely demanding justice for "the broken in our wars," in terms as unmeasured as those of the Syndicalists themselves. In fact, for the moment, there was a kind of subtle alliance between Creegan's men and their old foe, with a third and still more curious ally—the Craft-Platonists.

The Craft-Platonist Socialists, something like first cousins to the Syndicalists, were a new and fashionable off-shoot from the Craft Socialists, who in their turn had developed from the Platonists—a middle-class and aristocratic body on the extreme right of the movement. It was the sectarian tendency of arm-chair Socialism to hair-splitting, parallelling the splits in the religious bodies.

Nobody, including themselves, seemed to know exactly what they wanted, though, under the leadership of Damascene, they seemed, like the Craft-Socialists from whom they had broken away, to want everything taken over by the craftsman, as in the Guild system of the Middle Ages—the coal mines by the coal miners, the railways by the railwaymen, and even the studios by the artists—all in some way as yet not explained, to be administered for the benefit of the general public. Unlike the body from which they had split, however, the one thing they did want was that the transition of society from the capitalist to the guild system should find its passage in bloody murder and sudden death,

a consummation which they set out with picturesque violence.

Most of their adherents they drew from the study and the studio—none from the ranks of the workers, for whom they had a sublime love, which was returned with a sublime contempt . . . when the workers knew anything about them.

The Government officials professed no knowledge of these things and shut their eyes and ears to the growing thunder in the streets—to the lightning that ran along the ground. But Creegan, like Destin, felt that all this agitation needed a head to give it significance.

Finally Creegan suggested that they should take the Victoria Hall, the one hall in London which ever made the Government listen, and which held over ten thousand. The difficulty was that the proprietors would sooner cut their throats than lend it for such a purpose.

Then Destin had an inspiration, and suggested that they should call in the *Meteor*. So once more he found himself in the whirl of the wheels in Bethlehem House, treading the familiar corridor, and finding himself in the presence of the man with the grey eyes.

As he unfolded his proposal to the man before him, he was not conscious of the flicker of an eyelash. He would have thought he had failed did he not know the school of Bethlehem House, where all emotion, save gargantuan, was forbidden. "You will hear from us" was the editor's only reply.

And they did hear from them. The *Meteor* took the hall, "for a political meeting," without specifying particulars, and with its reputation and the £1,000 guarantee paid down, got it without difficulty.

In twenty-four hours, London was flooded with red posters announcing the great meeting, the speakers

being Creegan, Destin, Wildish, and Damascene, who with difficulty had been cajoled into speaking so that the Craft Socialists might be represented. But the greatest difficulty had been with Creegan, who for a long time refused to go on the same platform with Damascene, but at last yielded to Destin's persuasion, who pointed out that his refusal would mortally offend the Craft Socialists, who might be useful later in finding the money for the Winter Unemployment Campaign.

The chairman was to be the Duchess of Chillington, of whom Creegan was a particular pet—whether he liked it or not.

The *Meteor*, passing all its tradition of unorthodoxy, came out boldly for the men, flaunting its rebellious leaders in the face of the Government. In vain did the proprietors of the hall seek to break the contract—in vain did they offer its letting price as a fine for cancelling it. Creegan and the *Meteor*, an irresistible combination, grim and certain, held them to the letter of their bond.

So it was that on the night of the meeting, Creegan and Destin had to fight their way from the masses they had led in procession to the hall from Tower Hill and the Embankment, a-bristle with the banners of revolution. As they walked on to the platform half an hour over the time, led by the Duchess in an alarming autumn hat from Paquin, he felt like a fly crawling down there on that crescent of platform, with around him tier on tier stretching into the spiral of the roof, the pinky-grey mass of faces losing themselves under the tented canvas that bellied itself downwards.

Behind them, the organ boomed out the "Marseillaise" and the new marching song of the workless—"Bread and Roses." Little shivers of joy and fear ran down his spine as the crowd took up the refrain, but he quickly lost sight of the masses before him in one little, earnest,

pallid face, on the corner of the rows of seats behind the platform. It was the Green-eyed Girl.

It seemed to him a challenge—nor was he comforted by the sight of Vesta Craven who sat, freshly, in her place at the end of the chairs aligned with the speakers' in the front row.

The Duchess made quite a pretty little introductory speech in which graceful hesitation was blended with attack upon "the class to which I have the misfortune to belong." The constant iteration of "my class" and "your class" became a little painful, and, in spite of the speaker's honestly, a little artificial.

The audience at any rate felt it that way, though, with the politeness of the people, they did their best to put their aristocratic comrade at her ease. However, behind her, holding a watching brief as "a revolutionary political," Bowcher was encouraging with his "Hear-hears," and "Quite corrects," Mathman by his side crouching a little more over his stick, with a scattering of other middle-class Socialists Destin had met at the Chillington House reunion, which now to Destin seemed to belong to another age.

Wildish was to be the first speaker—the speaker to whip up the meeting. But Wildish was not there. Wildish never *was* there. So Destin had to take his place.

As he stepped to the front of the platform, he was greeted by a mass of sound, confused, then finding form, and reverberating around the bowl of the hall. It was his welcome. The welcome of the people to one of its heroes.

This astonished him, as these things always did astonish him, for despite his self-assertion and even appreciation, there was always a certain *naïveté* which made him surprised at recognition—which inspired and unstrung him together.

He made his speech, which in its opening was not different to the hundred and one speeches that were being made at this time at a hundred street corners by the orators of Syndicalism. But a difference showed itself as inspiration breathed on the fires of speech, and he passed almost unconsciously from the original subject matter, from the "Bread" to the "Roses" of life.

It was an experiment. Would the hungry democracy, panting for bread and the substances of life, rise to roses? For a few minutes he went on in silence, and then, developing his theme, he showed the democracy that the bread-road was but a path to something else—to the uplands where the roses grew. He determined he would show the Green-eyed Girl that the democracy whose materialism and lack of imaginativeness she had so often despised had in its head poetry as well as bread.

The cheers which had greeted his opening sentences had died away as he developed his argument. He finished in a close, oppressive silence. Had they understood?

His answer came.

A little Cockney, pale-faced and drawn, had jumped to his feet out of the ruck in front of him. "Roses! roses! roses! Roses! roses! for Christ's sake!" he screamed, incoherent. It was Graney—a new Graney startled out of his Cockaigne saturnity into poetry.

The cry was taken up about him; part of the audience had risen. "Roses—roses!" echoed through the hall, found its way muffled to the waiting thousands outside. A woman of the people waved clumsily a flower, silent, her face set. "Roses—roses!"

He glanced defiantly at the Green-eyed Girl as he had more than once glanced at her during his appeal. Now she knew.

But she was not smiling this time. Her face had other lights in it.

As Destin turned to take his place, he met Creegan's eyes full. There was the glare of hate in them. What had he done? Was Creegan ill? More than once in the previous year he had feared a break-down, and even coming in the procession to the hall his muttering, lowering jowl had startled him. What was the matter with him? . . . But Damascene was speaking now.

Damascene, as his name was called by the chairman, came forward from the scented coterie of the Craft-Platonists, where they lounged gracefully on one side of the platform. In some of them Destin recognised the feline young men he had seen that day at Vesta Craven's. They seemed to purr their appreciation and exclusiveness as their leader came forward to the centre, his cloak flowing behind him, winging him with crimson.

Damascene looked perfectly fresh—freshly manicured and toiletted generally. It was said that for these occasions Damascene had his face massaged and made up. At any rate, to-night his eyebrows pencilled themselves in two delicate crescents above the black eyes.

He fixed his crowd with a monocle much as he would have fixed his man if he had been fighting a duel. The man was curiously, unnaturally, popular, for as he came forward, his insolent smile blandly flirting the crowd, it burst into a wild welcome—grimy navvies cheering to him and winning from him a genuine smile of appreciative recognition, and from the young men behind him smiles of rather patronising friendliness. It was one of the whims of democracy which Destin had never been able to understand.

"Fellow-revolutionists"—he began, his smile suddenly giving place to impassivity.

". . . I only appear on this platform to-night under severe pressure. My friend Creegan will bear witness to that, and I only appear now because, rightly or wrongly, I—er—believe you fellows mean business this time. Now—do you? do you really?" (The voice was purring and enquiring.)

"If you will prove it by going out from this hall and killing a king or a couple of kings, or failing that, a brace of lords, I am yours now and for ever. But *do* something. For God's sake *do* something. I am tired of words.

"You know I am a Craft-Socialist. That means I want you chaps to take what you want. For example, let my friends of the cast-iron corrugated trousers go out from here and take the railways—let the miners go down the mines, and stay there . . . and so on. If you have a fancy to Buckingham Palace—don't hesitate—take it. Eh? Do you understand?" A crackle of laughter ran around the place.

"Oh, but I'm in earnest. You know you smell so dam dirty if you'll excuse my saying so, that *en route* you might take the Turkish Baths and the perfume shops in Piccadilly. In fact it's your unpleasantness that makes me a Socialist.

"I don't like sweat—do you? I like good dinners—*pâté de foie gras* and Chablis—don't you? I like harmony—something you don't understand yet but which your comrades of the Craft-Platonists will teach you.

"Then you know you believe in small wages and big families—I believe in big wages and no families at all. But all these things you can learn from us my dear friends. We are starting our Immoral Instruction classes at Marlington House, our headquarters, in the autumn. I hope you'll come.

"Then, you know I don't believe in the People. I never did. That is why I am a Democrat. I want to abolish you."

The crowd was laughing and cheering and jeering in front of him—a little uneasy . . . but who would take that devil Damascene seriously?

"Now let us get this Augean stable business over quickly. Use plenty of blood and brimstone for soap and water. Let us have some burnings and hangings. Don't be bashful. Put up the barricades, and when you've done all this, why, then you can come to me to lead you to the Land of Pale Desire, where there shall be neither marriage nor giving in marriage, and where man shall not live by bread alone, but by silks and scents and sounds."

Damascene sat down amidst cheers and jeers and laughter. Did it come from the audience or from the young men who now were cooing over their hero, who with a flirt of his cloak and monocle strolled off the platform like a man who has done his work?

A figure was standing craggily in the middle of the stage. This time there could be no mistaking the feeling of the mass for the man. The roaring welcome, mingled with the slogan of an Irish contingent which had marched to the hall with the pipes playing and the green colours flying, could be heard rising underneath.

Creegan's eye lowered, then lifted, and Destin saw a haunting, almost insolent look. It was the gloating of a king over his people. But the look had swung to the corner of the platform. It was a triumphant proof of something to someone.

Hoarse, almost inaudible, he started. He did not dip his tongue in honey, but in vitriol. He told them that all their sufferings were their own fault and lashed

them for the part they had taken in the war, and especially "the blind, leaders of the blind," in Parliament, whom they had followed.

Accustomed to the man's methods, nobody resented this at the beginning—"it was Creegan's way." But as the minutes went on, there were one or two half-stifled protests. These were ignored by Creegan, who held on his way, thrashing them with a hail of words. But ever through his attack there ran the moral that it was because they had not listened to their Syndicalist leaders and to him in particular that they found themselves in their present position.

The "I" began to get the upper hand, dominating the "you" and the "we."

Then came an ugly sneer. "You cowardly whelps!" burst from his lips in a stroke of ungoverned rage. . . .

"'Oo are you a-torking to?" came in a thin stream corrosive as the speaker's own, and a pale little face showed itself as it bobbed from the pack. It was Graney again—grey with rage.

With an exclamation Creegan had sprung off the platform, scattering the reporters, and had forced his way through and over the table, and into the body of the crowd where he lost himself for a moment, reappearing with a kicking, writhing something, which he gripped in his powerful claws by neck and trouser seat; carrying it foaming and screaming to the doors which he swung open with a slant of his shoulder, and flung the burden into the corridor. The crash came dully to the hall. He waited for a moment. There was no sound.

He made his way back to the platform, on which he leaped like a man vaulting a gate. Once more he stood there facing a silent crowd, his face white, the flash of madness in his eyes.

"Any of you can have more where that came from," he said quietly. Nobody moved.

The figure cranked itself out and over the thousands. With a forefinger uplifted like a second Isaiah, he told the story of the past, the present, and of that which was to come. He spoke of the divine right of labour and especially of the Syndicalist leaders of labour. He chaunted a pæan to power.

Power was the "Open Sesame" of the Democracy. "Get power boys—power. Worship it. Fight for it. Pray for it. Smash and hew your way into the Seats of the Mighty. You know the words—'He hath put down the mighty from their seat and hath exalted the humble and meek.' You were 'the humble and meek' of yesterday—to-morrow you will sit enthroned with the angels of God.

"What is it we want? Is it a dirty tuppence an hour more in wages? Is it another drink of beer in the twenty-four hours? Is it beasts of the field that ye are?

"No boys. We don't want the beer nor the bread. We want the earth! and I'm going to get it for ye!" He had turned to the corner of the platform—defiantly.

The people stared at the speaker. Was he joking? Would *he* get it for them? A man laughed.

But the eye of the speaker as it came round to single out the blasphemer showed itself in deadly earnest.

"I'm going to get it for you!" The words came again, dispassionate as those of a god.

"Yes, and the moon and the stars if ye will. I know what I know, and I have seen what I have seen. Those things that came to me in the night watches, when you were mouthing patriotism to heaven. Those things that I cannot speak about here." And then, in a final uncontrollable burst——

"I say these things by right . . . by divine right . . . by the divine right of democracy."

There was a sense of tremendous responsibility behind the man's voice. He was giving a message of the gods to the people. Again the head swung round to the corner of the platform. Then Destin saw for the first time where it looked—the person to whom the new revelation had been made.

It was the Green-eyed Girl.

The mass, imperfectly understanding, caught the words "Divine Right." Creegan might be a bit dotty, but by God! he was right there. "Divine Right." That was it. And as Creegan ended in one of his whip-lash perorations, saying that Labour could only come to its own through blood and barricade—through the General Strike—the same roar came from the crowd that Destin had heard that day in Trafalgar Square in the now dimmed past. But this time it made him uneasy.

As he was making his way out of the dressing rooms with his fiancée hooked on his arm, telling him how splendid he had looked and spoken with the proud voice of sweet ownership, he heard Creegan's voice raised hoarsely behind a screen. "Yes—by God! I'll give ye not only the earth—but the sun, moon, and stars on the top of it if ye but say the word. If it was young Destin that stood in the way I would crack his neck across me knee. Say the word, girl . . . say the word, mavourneen. . . ."

Denis did not wait to listen. But he knew who the woman behind the screen was as surely as though he had seen her. It was the Green-eyed Girl. Perhaps it was the shock of the thing that set his heart beating so fast.

As they came out under the arc-lights of the winter's night, a newsboy ran screaming past him. Coming

dimly to him from the flesh-coloured poster that clung to the boy as he ran were the words : —

WEST-END SCANDAL.
MR. DAMASCENE
ARRESTED !

The lights swung round him in a flaunting circus for a moment . . . now Damascene. The friends of Syndicalism.

It was the opening of the winter campaign.

XV

"PADDY MAC"

IN the days which followed, Destin was once more confronted by the problem of the *Meteor*. In the dark days before the end of the war he had been boycotted. Nobody wanted his articles or him. Now, with the rising tide of revolution he found himself once more run after and even courted.

His "Labour Thermometer" in the *Meteor*, which had been stopped for the time, was resumed "under the pen of our distinguished young contributor, who is so rapidly making a name for himself with both pen and tongue." Even one or two of the quarterlies had asked him to contribute analytical articles upon the causes of labour unrest, whilst a publisher, with a name that ringed the world, had discussed favourably with him the idea of a book to be called "The New Revolution."

Fortunately he had saved something in the time before the war, and so was able to hold over the evil days.

But through all this his father and mother steadfastly refused to see him. Even the magic of the *Meteor's* name failed to remove the ban of his mother, who for the first time in her life ceased to place the Bible and the *Meteor* upon more or less co-equal footing as inspired publications, and indeed began to regard the *Meteor* since its association with Creegan, as "not quite respectable." He had caught a glimpse of her

one day in a Bath chair, the face now shrunken, but the black fiery eyes as untamable as ever, with the mass of snowy hair brushed high above. His father was pushing it, the shoulders curved a little more. The tombstone was following the fate of all tombstones—it was falling over.

He had the impulse to go up to them, but at that moment his mother turned her eyes with disgust upon a tramp who, looking for cigarette stumps, slouched verminous and brutalised in the gutter. That decided him. His mother was of those who did not change. Perhaps he drew his own will from her.

In the organisation of the winter unemployment campaign, or "The Right to Live" campaign, as they called it, Destin found his time fully occupied. Creegan was useless for the organisation work, which he himself disliked, but there was nobody else to do it, as Wildish never touched this kind of thing, and indeed now seldom appeared.

Here it was that he discovered a helper where he least expected it. Vesta Craven had thrown herself into the breach arduously, and was proving both counsellor and consoler. She showed, as he had often noticed amongst the women of the movement, a rare talent for organisation, though until the appearance of Pamela Priggle and her friends, this was supposed to be woman's weak point.

It was his *fiancée* who called order out of chaos at the new Direct Action headquarters, for the Syndicalists throughout the country feeling the need for cohesion and organisation, had taken a rambling old building near the Mile End Road—Fraternity Hall. It was she who marshalled a corps of woman helpers from the ranks of her friends at the Hampstead flat, choosing her women with discretion, and distributing leaflets, arranging the advertising of the public meetings, and

dealing with the Syndicalist correspondence, which had outgrown the staff of Creegan's Union, and had been transferred to the new headquarters.

Every day Destin felt a new respect for the girl who came to him in the leaden hours to soothe and comfort him. It was like a fragrant bath, when discouraged and beaten out at the end of the day, the girl whom at one time he rather regarded as a butterfly, put her arms about him and kissed him into new hope.

A fresh annoyance had come. Annoyances were always coming. In the first place the Damascene scandal was found to have ugly ramifications, and became, quite unfairly, associated in the minds of the public with the Syndicalist movement and shadowed itself in the mind of the man-in-the-street as a sort of octopus.

A sub-editor with ideas had chosen the title "The Octopus Scandal" for his heading, and the tentacles of this grisly monster were found to have reached widely, holding not only Damascene himself but many of Damascene's most intimate friends, and those chiefly Craft-Platonists.

A mud-storm burst over the Syndicalists from the capitalist papers and even from the political Socialists, who by this time had in Parliament developed a very nice Puritanism, and were now, despite a protesting minority, hob-nobbing not only with their former Tory and Liberal opponents, but with the Churches.

To add to his worries, the articles of "Paddy Mac" broke out again, but this time in another way. Before, they had flailed unmercifully the political Socialist movement—now it was the skeleton of Syndicalism they laid bare with the delicacy of a pen which the writer used as a lancet, which tortured Destin with doubt, made Wildish laugh, and drove

Creegan, whose temper at this time was uncertain, into a frenzy.

Now he was reading in his rooms at Cress Street (under his rising circumstances he had promoted himself to a couple of good rooms on the first floor) the following:

"Whatever the faults of the political Socialists, who have demolished their enemies by the easy process of being assimilated by them, and who to-day are indistinguishable from the greyness of Liberalism, one can turn with even less hope or faith to the new Syndicalist movement led by Mr. Creegan, who is rapidly becoming the Christ of Labour, once more taking the position thrust temporarily, at the end of the war, upon his young lieutenant, Denis Destin, and in which the divine right of the king is replaced by the new divine right—the divine right of the democracy.

"I wonder if Mr. Creegan really knows the people who are associated with him in the march to the New Jerusalem. Does he not know that 'grapes are not gathered of thorns, nor figs of thistles,' to-day any more than two thousand years ago? And does he, himself a pure-souled visionary and dreamer, who we suspect believes himself in communication with the Deity, imagine that the gilt-edged *roués* and Satanists who have associated themselves with his propaganda, have anything in common with his aspirations, which, though wild and visionary, are at least pure? Let him ask his own confessor, who at least can tell him this, if nothing else.

"But leaving aside the morals of the new revolution, what are we to think of the rank and file who are enrolling in the army? Does not Mr. Creegan, or at least Mr. Destin, who is developing a very old head on very young shoulders, know that the rag, tag, and bobtail who are enrolling themselves so enthusiastically

under the banners of revolution were the enthusiastic 'blacklegs' of yesterday? Does the latter at least not see that the older, wiser heads of the Socialist-Labour movement like Jim McGraw and the Independent Socialists (and I do not mean the orthodoxists who are to-day anything rather than Socialist) are holding themselves aloof? Do they not know that even if they managed to stampede the harder-headed Trades Unionists into the Syndicalist movement, which they will never do permanently, they are making the most fatal appeal that Labour can make—the Appeal to Force? Is the secret history of the Great North-Western conference to-day so unfresh that they cannot see what must be the end of Labour's appeal to the Big Stick?

"Let them remember that those who live by the sword shall die by the sword."

Destin read and re-read the article, pulled between fear and anger and something else he could not define. That fellow was right after all. Yet he was also wrong. "Those who live by the sword shall die by the sword." Those were the words that burned themselves into his brain.

After all, the same thought had come to him many times before. In the debate in the House; at the Great North-Western conference; in a hundred public meetings. . . . Force.

What was the Power that Creegan talked of? Where was the Power? Why, the Power of course was the Big Stick, which Goring and the others waited to use, and of which they, not the Syndicalists, gripped the right end. Where would it finish?

Yet on the other hand the men who opposed direct action, which after all meant the Big Stick in practice, had failed and failed miserably. Paddy Mac, who he was sure was Kisterling, was right there at least.

In his first series of articles he had shown the weakness, or worse, of the politicals. Well, if you were not a political, you had to be a direct-actionist. But once the Green-eyed Girl had said there was a middle way—that the truth did not lie in either camp. Was she right, too?

But the thought of the Green-eyed Girl added to his nervousness and uneasiness. She had always made him uneasy and angry. She, like Kisterling, had always been against Creegan's methods. She had affected to be the Superior Person, looking down from the heights of intellect. Yet what did she know—a stranger—an onlooker?

Somehow that did not fit her, for she knew the movement even though she did not understand tactics. He had often seen the same curious contradiction in others—in McGraw for instance.

Denis had to go down to Bethlehem House that day about some angry letters which had been received by the editor from subscribers who threatened to withdraw their subscriptions because of his last "Thermometer" article. He was about to leave when Vesta Craven called for some instructions on her way to Fraternity Hall. He pushed the paper towards her.

The little fair face flushed with anger as she read the paragraph he indicated.

"Oh! but it is too shameful!" she said, throwing the paper on the floor and stamping. It was one of the impetuous, fascinating little ways she had developed since their engagement. But in this case it annoyed him—it seemed too futile in face of the article which brought it out.

"The man ought to be publicly whipped. It is all a pack of lies." Her eyes were burning, her face flushed, the little tendrils of hair that usually lay so

close to her neck seemed to crisp themselves. Lately, she had developed a new capacity for resentment.

"But it is *not* all lies," Destin said. "There is some truth in it."

"Not a word. Can't you see, Denis, that it is all the malevolent stupidity of that Kisterling, who is in no camp and cannot agree with anybody? I have always suspected him. I'm sure he gets big money for writing these lies against all Socialists. . . . It was all right against the politicals," she added inconsequently, "but this is too bad."

She walked with him to the Underground, squeezing his hand tightly at parting to assure him of her sympathy and understanding. Perhaps, after all, she was right. He had a great belief in feminine intuition, and especially in Vesta Craven's since she had proved so helpful at Fraternity Hall. Of course they must be chiefly lies anyhow. What could they do to make that man Kisterling unmask?

He was still knotted over this as he waited in the editor's room to see the chief, who had walked out as he entered, saying he would return in a moment, and leaving the door half open behind him. He heard him say impatiently—"Well I can't help it. I can't see her now. I am engaged." And then in reply to a murmured expostulation, he broke out: "'Insists!' Why, confound it! Paddy Mac or no Paddy Mac, she's not the earth. Who the devil is she that she should insist?"

Destin sat up. Then "Paddy Mac" was not a man but a woman. Who could she be?

In the conversation that followed he forgot all about the incident, and having settled things more or less satisfactorily with the editor, he took his leave. He passed out through the anteroom, when he heard a close, quiet little voice say—"I'm sorry, but I must

insist upon seeing the editor, who I know is in there."

"Insist." "Insist."

The truth broke in upon him. "Paddy Mac" was the Green-eyed Girl. The writer with the pen like a scalpel was a girl after all. Then he saw that the writer could only have been the girl. It was her way.

So she was the traitress.

What would Creegan say? That was the difficulty. Should he tell Creegan now? If he told him the man would do something rash, for he knew Creegan. If he did not tell him, the attacks would continue. But in any case the attacks would continue. This girl was not easily stopped. Detestable as he now knew her to be, at least he could not deny her that.

Drawn between many minds he determined to put it before Vesta Craven and to trust to her woman's wit to get him out of the difficulty. This he did upon reaching Fraternity Hall, where he found his *fiancée*, charming and flushed, directing operations amongst her satellites. He called her into his own room and put the matter before her.

Her face was very still as he spoke. He was surprised to see her take it so quietly.

"What would you do?" he asked.

"Oh," she said almost indifferently, "you will of course not say a single word to Creegan about it. If he knew the real story of the traitress" (there was spume in the word), "if he knew how she had been taking blood-money to paint his Syndicalism with a dirty brush, he would—yes, I'm sure he would—strangle her. And we must have no more scandal just now. We have enough. The movement is bigger than the man. Some day you shall tell him, after we have come to our own, but not now."

Denis Destin listened to her with a feeling of doubt. But after all, he saw the soundness of her advice. Creegan was uncertain. If Creegan got within the law to-day the new movement would go to pieces. Better keep quiet.

All the same, there was a strained feeling at his heart as he turned to his work.

XVI

THE GRAND INTERNATIONAL

THE idea had been buzzing in Creegan's bonnet for a long time. It was the idea of his life—the great culmination of the fight for freedom which should usher in the new age. The Grand International Trade Union of all trades and industries, which should see the end of craft Unionism—the One Union idea—the break down of the old sectional Unionism—the Union which should ultimately absorb all other Unions, bringing them under one central control. This was to be the true army of Labour.

The membership of the new International Union, which he intended should give effect to the international combinations and understandings of Labour and spread its meshes over Europe, holding Capitalism in its grip and smothering it, had its nucleus in the men of the Transport Union. To this was now adding the leaping figures of that inchoate mass of labour, molluscous, swept hither and thither, uncertain and purposeless, which in times of stress poured into its Unions and after the stress ebbed again. This mass was now, under the impulse of the crisis after the war, pouring into the Grand International.

Unfortunately, as yet, the rank and file of the ordinary Unions showed no signs of linking up with the Grand International. A few here and there came out, but the mass remained behind; not from any special love for the old methods, but through natural obtuseness and

lethargy. "The Trade Unionist," McGraw had once said, "was a sleepy beastie. There was nothing he asked so much in life as to be left alone."

Satalia had again appeared on the scene, flying over the Channel at the signs of the new revolution, her scarlet bodice glimmering the press of Britain, for revolution drew her as the flame draws the moth.

She had started a new tour of the country, urging the Trades Unionists into the new Grand International camp, though Destin had been opposed to her coming into the fight, for he feared the effect of her Latin fire upon the temperament of the Anglo-Saxon, which it chilled instead of warming. But Creegan overrode him. A pretty thing indeed to throw cold water upon the first response from their brother Syndicalists across the water, who one day should form part of the Grand International.

Then the labour troubles took a more definite phase. Even the politicals were forced to abandon their attitude of neutrality and discover the fact that the workers were starving; all except Steltham, who with one or two others depreciated the use of force, but were overruled by McGraw and the growing militant minority which now was forming behind him on the Labour benches.

The orthodox Trade Unions had compelled them to action, for once more, with the masses of workless coming on their books again, the remnant of their funds was being still further eaten away. With the siren voice of Syndicalism in their ears, some of the Trade Unionists even threatened to decamp to the Grand International if new methods were not adopted.

To Creegan's assurance came the news that with the object-lesson of the hundreds of thousands of workers now in the Grand International and the necessity of unity, the orthodox Unions had been compelled to

enter into an alliance with the Syndicalists to force the Government to action. At a Conference of the Executives of the Trades Unions Federation, to which the mass of the Unions were now affiliated under the new stress, and of the Grand International, certain working terms were drawn up, which committed the parties to nothing but a temporary alliance until better conditions were obtained and work provided by the Government.

"Bread, Work, or Revolution!" was now the cry.

It was decided to force the hands of the Government by a national strike of all trades and industries, the first attempt in Britain to bring the General Strike proper into action.

There was blood in Creegan's eye as he and Destin walked from the conference. "We have them now where we want them," he said. He raised one hairy paw above his head. "Who was it said that Direct Action was played out? Where are the politicals to-day? Necessity has shown them that the strike is the only weapon.

"Did ye see how I walked over Manby?" he asked, his temper rising. "Did ye see me go through Johnson? Where was Jim McGraw when I got to work on him?" There was brutal jubilation in his voice.

"They all have to come to Brian Creegan when they want something done. They all have to come to me."

He laughed. There was something boyish and joyful in it. In the hard sunshine of the March morning, his cheroot jutting from the corner of his mouth, his sugarloaf hat slanting over his hard, keen face and steel-grey hair, his eyes skinting bluely into the sun, he looked a beautiful untamable animal.

"Listen, Denis boy. They say I am an autocrat. They say I am too hard. Why wouldn't I be hard—why wouldn't I have me way when I know what is best for them?" He was arguing, not with Destin, but

with some invisible third person, and then, as his companion remained silent:—

"Ye don't doubt me—do ye?"

The face had changed—he was looking close, piercingly, at his lieutenant.

"Denis boy—I love ye, but by Christ! if ye stood in the way of the people—of the Cause—I'd think no more of choking you than I'd think of choking Goring's bull neck."

Destin, in spite of himself, felt afraid. All this talk of omnipotence—yes, of the physical violence itself—frightened him. Where was it going to end? But he had to answer. This man would not be denied.

"Of course I don't doubt you Brian," he said, trying to feel it, "but all the same I'm a bit afraid sometimes."

"Afraid! Afraid! What right have you to be afraid if I'm not? What are ye afraid of?"

"Well Brian, you saw the Big Stick at work at the Great North-Western. And those fellows mean to fight. You know that."

"Fight! of course they'll fight—but so will we. And we are twenty to one. We'll raise a Citizen Army. You know we've commenced already. Captain McBride has hold of the men and the authorities daren't stop us.

"I tell you, the people will never come to their own through the milk and water of Parliament—but only over the barricade. . . . God! . . . to die in the street!"

He had dropped his cigar and was staring at it on the ground.

"Denis, it's good to be alive boy. And maybe some day we'll all be happy. Some day."—His voice had changed—"Maybe Denis boy I'll have a wife and little gossoons and little girls about me before I die." He was

standing in the busy London street, this time looking above the housetops as though he saw a vision. The blue eyes had pierced the envelope of another world, seeing things the other did not see.

He shivered a little. "It's quare Denis, but there's someone walking over me grave. Do ye believe in them things?"

"Nonsense Brian," the other replied. "But there's a long way to go before the little gossoons come to us."

"Maybe not so far as ye think. I have a great mind to tell you"—he put his grip deep on Destin's shoulder until it hurt.

"There's a girl Denis, maybe ye know her . . ." he broke off and muttered—"No, not now, not now. . . ." But Destin knew of whom he spoke and something hurt him. Perhaps it was the thought of what he knew about the girl and of what the man didn't know.

"But Brian—what are we going to do if we win? What is the future to be? It is what I am often asking myself."

"Damn the future! let the future look after itself," replied Creegan. He strode on.

They were passing along the Strand, when Creegan suddenly stopped and wheeled Destin round square to the roadway.

"Look Denis—look!"

On a poster were the words—"Great Strike—Vienna Aflame!"

"It's coming boy—it's coming."

He bought the paper and turned to the "Stop News" column. "A great strike has broken out in Vienna with the demand for work by the unemployed, who are parading the city in thousands. The shops are menaced and looting has already commenced."

It was the recoil of war.

The evening papers told of strikes in Berlin. Within

the week, Milan, Parma, and Rome had taken fire, with Paris trailing behind them. In the stoppage of the commercial machine following the war and the inpouring of the millions from the front, strike wave after strike wave was running lambent over the Continent. It was as though some telepathy existed between country and country. It was Paris yesterday—what would it be to-morrow? The hounds of labour were hot on the trail, the blood-scent running strongly in the nostrils. It was International Trades Unionism *in excelsis*. It was the justification and apotheosis of the Syndicalist movement.

Creegan's temperature rose with the news. The Day of Armageddon which he had so often prophesied was approaching. Labour was coming to its own at last by the Direct Action route.

"Where are the politicals now Denis?" was his cry. "Where are they?"

XVII

THE APPEAL TO FORCE

THE secret had kept. The day of the General Strike, the throw of the dice upon which organised labour had placed everything, was known to nobody save the few at the head.

There was perhaps a certain tension in the air—an oppressiveness—but nothing determinate. The Government was quiet. There had been rumours of the movements of troops from Aldershot and the strengthening of the police in the cities, but nobody really believed them. Everything went on as before

Creegan it was who threw the match into the powder magazine. Three red rockets were to be the signal, sent up from Fraternity Hall and taken up from centre to centre—to pass from city to city.

It was an April afternoon of bellying thunderclouds, which shut out the sun, steeping London in a ghostly twilight. Destin was coming back to the Hall in the brooding silence, when there came to his ears a dull boom. Startled and forgetful he thought it was the opening of the thunderstorm, when he saw, stabbing themselves upwards into the night, each following the other, three fiery serpents which hissed as they mounted, spitting malignantly as they burst into a shower high over the red flag that broke itself out from the roof. Standing underneath it, the halyards in his hands, the gaunt figure of Creegan, who, his hand to his eyes, followed the fiery trail up there in the storm-skies.

The silence had fallen again. Then the stir of feet coming through the shadows.

Now the streets were full of people. Close by, the gates of a jam factory opened, emptying into the street a flock of girls white-aproned and hatted, who jigged a sort of Carmagnole in the road. A railway train that ran below him stopped, and he saw the driver climb off his engine, leaving it standing there. From an adjacent signal box he watched the signalman, his hat on his head, in his hand a glazed black bag with his empty lunch things, walk soberly down the stairs.

It was the General Strike. The dream become reality.

That night Fraternity Hall was ablaze with lights. So was Bethlehem House, which, however, finding by this time that the animal they had spurned had taken the bit in its teeth, now wanted to pull it up. All night the machines roared—all night the motor-cars and newsboys streamed the streets. The Underground stations were crowded with masses of City men wanting to get home and finding no trains. Motor buses lay about the streets like stranded leviathans. The shopkeepers, timid, were putting up their shutters, fearing something behind this silence. A mass of people thronged the incline to the Great North-Western, cursing the strikers. Some of the suburbanites had even started to walk along the deserted metals—deserted save for the lines of trains which blocked the ways.

The *Meteor* leader in the morning was sententious and responsible. "Whilst Labour had been content to demand the natural things of life in a natural way, they had been satisfied, serving all classes, to help it to get what it wanted and so allay labour discontent. But now that the brutal General Strike had been loosed, now that Democracy had started on its crimson march to power, they had no option but to stand on the side of law and order."

The other papers, whether Liberal or Conservative, followed suit. The *Olympian* frankly stated that the temporary Coalition War Government of yesterday was the forerunner of the permanent Coalition Government of to-day—another sort of War-Government, forecasting the time when they would only have two parties in Great Britain, the Socialist and the anti-Socialist. "We even go so far as to say that we shall find in the ranks of the newer and more permanent Coalition many of our old-time opponents in the ranks of Labour, who will give Labour that sane representation it needs."

Creegan was contemptuous. "What did I tell you?" he asked triumphantly. "I am always right. Now we shall know who are for us and who against. Labour must stand on one side or the other of the Syndicalist fence—no more sitting on it now."

Destin, although he had anticipated it, yet felt chilled when he saw the new combination. If they were appealing to force, it was a case of all the machinery of force welded together through the centuries against the weapon of yesterday, which might snap in their hands.

Now, Nonconformist and Churchman had sunk their differences, financial and theological, in the face of the common enemy. Destin, like Creegan, had regarded the churches as spent forces. Now they were undeceived—at least Destin, for nothing could shake Creegan from an opinion once taken.

The nonconformists and the high churchmen of yesterday who had been flirting with the rising democracy, now came out as sanguinary lambs of Christ. The Right Hon. Sir Jasper Noah, President of the Free Church Assembly, was announced to speak at the "Magog" to the members of the Free Churches, and Destin, through the kindly office of Bread, the nonconformist journalist, managed to get a ticket of admission.

He recalled the older meeting of the years before which had ushered him into the movement. Now he found himself listening in the same hall to Sir Jasper, a splendid looking patriarch of some seventy winters, whose flowing beard and leonine head might have stepped out of the Book of Genesis. The grey-coated men before him, who seemed to be doing their best not to look like clergymen, listened to him with grave attention and appreciation. His speech, which was flashed over the wires the same evening, was direct:

"Let us not make the mistake, friends, that Christianity excludes the exercise of force. Behind the promises of Christianity there are always the penalties —the sword of God uplifted to smite down the sinner. The Divine Word itself is full of warnings, and even utters its last comforts beneath the lurid sunset of Revelation.

"Force is hell we are told, but hell itself has its function of purification. Christianity is not only a religion of mildness—it is also a religion of blood. Christianity is not merely evolutionary—it is catastrophic. All government rests upon force—behind the judge there stands the soldier with ball cartridge and the hangman balancing his noose.

"In these days, no man can serve two masters. You who listen to me are either for Society or against it. The seductions of a spurious democracy no longer must find a place in your hearts. You must tear out the evil thing before it shears you of your strength as Delilah shore Samson. The thunders of the pulpit must be followed by the thunder of the guns. If we have to slay this hydra-headed monster of Syndicalism, the sooner the better. You are lambs of Christ—but lambs that can bite and tear."

Yet even here as in that other "Magog" meeting, there was the enemy within the gate.

"Shame! Shame! Sir Jasper."

It seemed the echo of his own voice from the past. Once more he saw the thrust of neck—the intentness which turned and crannied to get a view of the speaker.

But this time there were other cries.

"Hear—hear!" came from a dark-faced young clergyman, with the saucer hat of the High Churchman. Here and there were spatters of "Hear—hears!" drowned in a rising though orderly growth of "Disgraceful!" "Traitors!"

"Who says 'Shame'?" asked the patriarch of the platform, dignified, holding up a strong white hand.

"I do."

In the centre of the hall, within a few chairs of the place where he himself had raised his protest before, there rose a slender figure, clothed in grey. The face was the face of a child, crowned however with snow white hair. The eyes luminous. The mouth small but firm. The whole figure vibrant.

The figure was known to every man there, including Destin. That was Trent, the man who had left his Nonconformist church and started a church of his own in East London: "The Church of Christ—Socialist," taking with him half his congregation. "Socialist Trent," scholar, University man, and fanatic.

Each Sunday the reporters of the London papers crowded to the church of the man who preached Christ the Socialist. Every Sunday the curious, half fearing blasphemy, crowded his doors. Self-advertiser or zealot—vulgar tub-thumper or saint—hypocrite or martyr. So the people spoke of him.

"I say 'Shame!' Every word of your speech, Sir Jasper, is a blow in the teeth of the Crucified One. The Church of Christ is not the church of noose and rifle but the church of love."

"Rot!" "Humbug!" The cries were coming from the grey-coated men about him.

"I tell you, Sir Jasper, it is you and people like you who have twisted the Churches from their true path and the Word of God into a byeword for the-man-in-the-street. It is you who are emptying the churches of Christ, from which you have driven the Spirit of God. It is because of you that the masses of the people outside the Churches are following that Spirit to its refuge elsewhere—in the democratic movements of the day. You are a disgrace to your high position. You are no Christian. . . ."

"Throw him out! Blasphemy! Blasphemy!"

Destin knew the signs too well to make any mistake. All mobs were the same, whether navvies or parsons. He saw the blood coming to the eyes that turned themselves upon the speaker.

"I tell you, Sir Jasper, that God . . ."

The figure came violently forward. In a moment there was a surging group of which he was the centre—the white hair and grey eyes struggling over the top. Two muscular Christians had seized him—one of them a bald-headed man with a bull neck and eyes that stared themselves apart. They hoisted him up bodily and dragged him to the central aisle, where, to the cry of those left behind, they broke with him through the swing doors.

There was a subdued tumult as the steps receded. Then all was silence.

Sir Jasper Noah was not again interrupted. The lambs of Christ had done their work.

XVIII

THE GREEN-EYED GIRL

As the General Strike developed, Society developed with it. As each railway was hung up and the wheels of industry came to a standstill, Society showed itself outraged but resolved, sinking all differences before the wolf in the fold.

The tramway and railway companies were making half-hearted attempts to keep their trams and trains running, importing little trembling "black-leg" clerks or burly police inspectors, who brought confusion wherever they pulled the unfamilar lever. To break the strike, the Workers' Freedom Society had been called upon to supply the millions of "free labourers" about whom it had always boasted, but was only able to supply a handful, and that of doubtful quality. Some of the submerged, attracted by the new and princely wages, had come out of their slums, but, untrained and unfit, could not keep the giant wheels turning.

There had been some talk about calling up the conscripts to the colours, but this was regarded as a last resource, as the authorities were doubtful about the effect upon the people if they used the conscription of yesterday as a strike-breaker.

In the meantime Creegan every day grew more confident. Each morning saw him entrenched behind a bulwark of newspapers, from where he threw his challenges to Destin, who daily became more uncertain as success seemed within their grasp.

One morning, as Destin came into the inner room at Fraternity Hall, Creegan showed him a caricature in *Punch*, representing him as a sort of revolutionary red-capped navvy, wielding a pickaxe over the head of Society, which cowered under his feet.

"Do ye know who that is?" he asked, triumph in his eye. "The fellow that drew that, knew his business—but there's something about it too that I don't like—it's too . . . too humble. When the people want a leader, they want a leader. I'm not a navvy any longer."

It was the old touch of omnipotence. The blue eyes were a trifle more uncertain—a trifle more wavering.

Whilst they were speaking, a London docker, an undersized sandy little man, came into the room and without apology interrupted with a question.

"What do ye mean by coming in in that way for?" scowled Creegan. "Have ye no manners? Maybe you'll knock in future before ye come into a private room."

The look he bent upon the little man frightened him, and he scuttled out with a muttered apology like a startled rat. "We'll have to teach these fellows manners, Denis," said he.

Destin looked at him, with something on his lips. But one look at the man was sufficient. He was silent. Most people were silent before Brian Creegan.

"We are dead sure of victory now, my boy. No more peaceful progress backwards by the vote. The strike! The strike!"

As they were speaking, the door opened and the Green-eyed Girl came in, looking, Destin thought, a little wan, with shadows under her eyes and in the hollow of her cheeks as though cobwebs hung there. At the sight of her his gorge rose. The traitress had

actually the insolence to come into the camp of the man she was betraying.

But Creegan had hurried to her side and was impulsively shepherding her to the caricature. She did not seem unwilling, and smiled and praised it. Destin forced himself to a distant greeting, and was taken off his balance by hearing the girl say coolly to Creegan—"You know, Brian, I want you to tell me your plans—something I can write on in the *Meteor*." The insolence of the girl passed belief.

Destin came forward quickly. He was going to stop that at any rate.

"You know, Brian, I don't agree with everything you do," the full voice went on, "but all the same I like to know what you're doing."

"You don't agree with me, girl. Ah, that's because ye don't know what you're talking about. Now listen here."

He ran off into a violent explanation in which he used arms, eyes, and even his cheroot to emphasise his points. But they were all general. As a matter of fact, Destin remembered with relief, Creegan himself had no clear idea of their plans, which were gripped only by himself and the other members of the Strike Organisation Committee, upon which Creegan's name appeared, simply because he could not be left out. Organisation had little interest for Brian Creegan.

The girl came straight towards him. "Why do you avoid me, Mr. Destin?" she asked smoothly. "Are you afraid of me?"

There was a rough answer upon his lips, but somehow he could not be rude to the girl in that moment.

"I? I'm afraid of nothing—not even of you," he laughed, a little uneasily. "I'm only afraid of Brian Creegan there," he said ironically.

"You have reason to be." The little voice had sunk

earnestly. "You remember what I said to you that day at the Circester Congress—'Brian Creegan will break his heart some day.' Well, he is going to do it unless we save him."

"We." "We." It seemed mockery. She, the girl who was attacking him anonymously. She, the girl who hated the Syndicalist movement.

"Who are 'we'?" he asked brutally.

"Why, you and I of course," the girl replied simply. In spite of himself there was something that touched him in the association of his name with hers.

But at that moment Vesta Craven came into the room, a sheaf of correspondence in her hand.

She did not seem to see the other girl, whom she ignored as she came forward. She slipped her arm through Destin's, with her charming air of proprietorship, as she showed him the papers. It vexed him. He made a half mechanical movement and loosed it. Vesta Craven's pink had taken a deeper shade.

Then he felt ashamed of himself, and almost ostentatiously he put his arm through hers as though he had moved only to make the change. But the Green-eyed Girl was talking again to Creegan, her slender figure, clothed in a little short grey-blue jacket and skirt, plain and close fitting, setting off the Indian stone necklace she wore. Destin glanced at her once and then turned away. He hated to look at her.

She pretended to have come to warn Creegan and the Strike Committee of the preparations that were going on behind the scenes. Creegan called to Destin, who left Vesta Craven's side. She seemed reluctant to leave the room, but having got the information she wanted, finally went out.

"Come here, Denis," he said, "and listen to this story. It'll amuse you."

"I'm only warning Brian that it is a case of Brian

Creegan versus the British Empire. If you think that Society can be terrorised into submission by even a complete General Strike, you are making a great mistake—a vital mistake. Call off the dogs before it is too late. The man they are holding up is a dangerous man—he is armed to the teeth—his pocket and his beliefs are being threatened—and he is a little frightened. Frightened men are dangerous."

"Frightened," growled Creegan. "By Christ! we'll tear the throat out of him. We'll empty his pockets. It is a case of 'stand and deliver' now."

"But, Brian, you don't know—you really don't." She had put one little hand on the great arm and was looking up into the blue eyes that towered above her; looking up tenderly, it seemed to Destin. The woman was a Delilah. A moment ago he had been willing to listen to her—now that look banished all consideration from him. She was treacherous.

"Let me ask you a question—only one," she went on as he broke away impatiently.

"Have you got hold of the policeman? have you got hold of the soldier? is the navy in your hands? Is every redcoat and every bluejacket a Syndicalist? Is he even a Trade Unionist?"

"No, of course not. You know that as well as I," replied Creegan.

"Then call off the dogs. All Society rests on force. Until you get the force on your side you are challenging something you cannot tackle. Come, Brian. You had once a name as a fighting man. What would you think of going into the ring with your bare fists against a man armed with a revolver?"

The little voice was immensely pleading. Where was it that he had heard those words before? "All Government rests on force." It was Sir Gilbert Goring speaking again.

"I will tell you something else," the girl went on speaking low and more rapidly. "At the moment . . ."

The door opened. They turned round impatiently. It was Miss Craven again, who with forehead creased was bringing in some more papers.

"Not now, Miss Craven," said Creegan.

"No, Vesta, go away now," said Destin peremptorily. Nor did he notice the angry look that came into the girl's eyes. She went out, her head a trifle high, but the others had turned their backs on her.

". . . At the moment," went on the girl, "do you know that the masters are making overtures to the 'key' unions so as to break the strike? Do you know they are following the American method?—I saw them doing the same thing some years ago in the United States. They simply take certain key unions like that of the locomotive men, the men they cannot run a General Strike without; they pet them, give them high wages and short hours, and get them over against their comrades. When this strike has run a few weeks they will get them over. You are playing against loaded dice, Creegan."

Creegan walked over to the table and picked up a *Meteor*. With a heavily ditched forefinger he pointed downwards at a tiny paragraph. . . . "It has been ascertained that nearly all the locomotive drivers are out."

"There's your answer," he said, the old triumph in his voice. "It isn't Brian Creegan that doesn't know his material. I tell ye this strike is different to all the others. I tell ye."

The girl, her voice a little unsteady and pleading, after glancing at Destin, looked at the man she addressed as a mother might look at a child, and went on—"But there is something else. I cannot speak of it now, but it is coming. The masters I tell ye will

draw the men to beat you from your own ranks. I tell you." She had unconsciously repeated the end of her sentence like Creegan. "There are such things as 'private braves.' Did ye ever hear tell of the braves in the Colorado Mine Strike?"

"Ah, don't be tellin' us those old wives' tales. That is old history. This is the strike of to-day—not of yesterday. We are after a hell of a war I tell you. Do ye think labour is the same to-day?"

"Yes. . . . To-day as yesterday," said the girl turning to go. She stopped at the door.

"But I tell you, you will meet death in the noonday. You will fall, the life shot out of you.

"I tell you—you two who will not listen to me because I am a woman—I tell you. You have appealed to the sword. You will fall by the sword."

The little figure had passed out through the door, leaving Destin and Creegan staring at each other.

"She's cracked, Denis boy, she's cracked I tell you."

Creegan had broken into a high hard laugh.

XIX

THE CITY THAT ROSE IN THE NIGHT

THE strike, silent, sure, had been on for three weeks. Industry was touched as though by the finger of fate. The nerves of commerce were paralysed. "A paralytic stroke, Denis. A stroke!" Creegan, high, assured, threw the words at his friend, as he came in one morning to his work.

From underneath came the marching and countermarching of men with hoarse cries of command. "Listen to 'em Denis. It does your heart good. Listen to 'em drilling. If the Government wants peace, we'll fight them that way. If they want war—by the holy Cromwell! they shall have war. Listen to them."

The high clear voice of the officer in command came through the door of the room. It was from the son of a General in the English Army, himself a V.C., who had won his honours on the battlefield and who had, in the challenge of the new democracy, thrown over allegiance to friends, to church, and, deepest of all, to class. "By the right there! Form fours! Quick march!" The words came in a high staccato.

Creegan's Invincibles.

"And we've better than those Denis. We have the finished article—the men from the Navvies Brigade who were drilled in the Great War.

"Let us go out into the streets, Denis, and talk things over," said Creegan, lighting a cheroot at the end of the stump in his hand. "We'll have a walk in the Victoria Park."

They went out into the silent streets. "General" Strike held the city in his grip. As they passed along, Creegan was greeted by the women and children, the little ones running to catch his legs. It was strange to see how the man changed as he felt the clutch of tiny hands. He bent down, picked them up, taking a child on each shoulder—and so they passed on their way in triumph to the greetings of hard-faced navvies, of dockers, and to the less responsive smiles of the women, who, hunger-hollowed, crowded the doorways.

He set his load down gently as they came to the park, and they walked through the gates. But where were the children who usually dotted the grassy spaces? The park was empty. Creegan stood stock still in the middle of the path, shading his eyes with his hands. "Be Jasus! they've started," he said under his breath.

As far as the eye could reach, bell tents paralleled the grass. Wherever the eye turned were tripods of arms, the smoke of fires, and the movement of khaki-clad figures—each moving surely—purposeful.

A town had risen in the night.

Denis looked, and as he did, his heart leaped and failed him. For a moment the white tents limned themselves on the green grass and then lost themselves in a mist.

He was not a coward, but this orderly certain array presaged the beginning of the end. It was Trafalgar Square once again. Society was not going to take the strike lying down; it was not coming to the men cap in hand asking for settlement by arbitration. This was its reply.

Some soldiers passed, scarcely glancing at Destin and Creegan. Then one of them checked himself and said something to his companions. They turned their heads towards Creegan and Destin and laughed. There was contempt in that laugh, the contempt of the dis-

ciplined man for the undisciplined. Yet the men were of the working class. An officer, his smart, leathered legs shining in the morning sun, walked indifferent past, the men springing to the salute. Nobody interfered with them as they moved along the paths. Society did not trouble about them . . . yet.

"It's come, Brian," said Destin at last.

"Yes, thank God! it's come. If they want blood they shall have blood." The voice was confident, yet, for one moment, Destin could have been sure he saw a shadow hanging there over the clear, certain eyes. Creegan wheeled. They walked out of the path back to Fraternity Hall, watching on the road a company of Guardsmen, automatic figures, moving to the word of command on the roadway.

Inside they heard the voice—"By the right there! Form fours! Quick march!"

Creegan's eye glistened as they went down to the flagged cellar beneath the hall, which they were using as a drill room. Before them were a couple of hundred corduroyed men, of all sizes, moving uncertainly to the word of command coming from a tall, soldierly, clean-faced young man, who, as they entered, gave the word—"Ready! Present!"

The ranks before him raised the staves they carried instead of guns, raggedly.

"This is the real thing!" said Creegan.

A messenger ran down the steps into the cellar. "The railway stations are full of soldiers," he said, breathlessly—"they've been sleeping in the waiting rooms all night. They wouldn't let me go down the slope to the Great North-Western."

The telephone rang upstairs. Creegan ran up the steps into his room, followed by Destin. He took up the receiver, listening, his eye defiant, as though he were challenging some invisible foe. . . . "Well, anyhow,

they can't shoot us down in cold blood for doing nothing—but if they want war they can have it.

"Here Destin—they've put the soldiers guarding the British Museum and Westminster Abbey — as if we wanted to hurt their dirty tabernacles."

Destin took a sudden resolve.

"Listen Brian," he said, a new note in his voice. "Listen to me. Do you know what all this means?" The other read the message in his face.

"What, are you going to turn white-livered? Has the girl that came here the other day turned your heart to water—she that couldn't turn mine?" He spat contemptuously into the empty grate.

"No, but the lives of these men rest on your shoulders and mine. We've got to be careful, desperately careful. We are walking on a tight rope a thousand feet high with a noose around our necks: a slip and we are finished."

"Well, what is your life or mine to the Cause?" asked Creegan.

"You *must* listen Creegan." The voice was hard now, so hard that Creegan looked at him in surprise. "If we fling our people against the soldiers, it is the end of us, of the strike, of the people's cause. This strike will go down in bloody, helpless, murder. Do you hear?" He was speaking to Creegan as though he were a little child.

"The girl was right. Yes, I don't like her and I don't agree with her, but she was right. We're up against something stronger than we. If we can carry through the strike peacefully, well and good. But I am thinking they won't let us. And how are we going to hold our fellows back?"

From underneath came the staccato—"By the right there!—Hold up your heads!" and the confused stamping of hobnails on the stone floor.

"'Hold them back.' Who's going to hold them back? We are going to launch them at the soldiers—at the Government—at Society. I, Brian Creegan, say so, and God help you or any man that tries to spoke our wheels now."

But Destin did not blench.

"Call them off, Brian," he said quietly. "Call them off. The girl was right."

"Blast the girl and you too!" Creegan's face was slowly empurpling. "'Call them off.' No—not if I rain blood over England. 'Call them off.' No—not if they shoot us all down where we stand. Better be dead and free than living and slaves." He added slowly, pausing between each word:

"Never! so—help—me—God!"

Destin looked at him. He knew in that moment he was facing something that could not be changed—like so many other things. He put on his hat, suddenly resolved, and walked out of the room.

XX

POWER

WHAT he had set his mind to do was distasteful, but there was no other way. He knew the girl he was in search of generally did her writing in the reading room of the Independent Socialists, and there he found her, the little head with the square-cut dark hair now bending earnestly over the manuscript before her.

She felt him come in, for she turned round sharply. Destin, in his own direct way came to the point.

"Listen. I've come to make an appeal to you. Creegan is mad. He believes he is Almighty God and he will plunge London and perhaps England into a blood-bath within the next twenty-four hours unless you can stop him."

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"He is dead set on this strike. . That means he is dead set on murder—on massacre without a chance of retaliation. I cannot see those fellows down there, who would follow him into the pit, go like sheep to the slaughter—to their deaths before the soldiers. It is too horrible. And Creegan will lose his life too." He looked at the girl narrowly.

"Please be plainer," she said shortly.

"Well, you know as well as I that Brian loves you better than anything else—except, perhaps, the movement. For the movement is his first love, his wife and children. But you are the only living being with any sort of power over him. I have seen him look at

you—mutter about you—and he loves you to the last hair of your head."

He took a kind of savage pleasure in saying this over and over again. "He loves you to the last hair of your head."

The girl had taken a newer pallor.

"So you want me to use his love, or whatever you call it, for me to take him from what he considers his duty," she said, a strain of bitterness creeping under her voice.

"I want you to save him from himself—and with him the lives of many others. It will be a holocaust I tell you. Have you seen the soldiers in the park? They are ready to the last cartridge."

"Oh yes, I know all about the soldiers. I know all about everything—it is my business," she said simply. She looked then, as always, irritatingly sure and confident.

"Then you will go to him?" asked Destin.

"I will do nothing of the kind," said the girl with heat. "Do you think I'm going to drag myself in the dust before Brian Creegan—to be spurned—and for nothing?" The girl's love for the man and the pride behind, seemed to show itself in every syllable. But once he had thought she did not love him. Yet this made her conduct the more incomprehensible.

"So you put your dirty pride before the lives of men, women, and children—yes—even before the life of the man you love?"

"How dare you say that?" The girl had come close to him, whispering the words low in his face. Destin stepped back as he felt the hot breath.

"How dare you say that?" she repeated.

"'Dare.' 'Dare,'" he said. "I dare anything—and you know it's true."

The girl did not speak. "You must go to him now,"

he said, his angry courage coming to him in the face of the woman before him.

"'Must!' I will not. I have finished."

The girl had turned her back on him and was reading her manuscript as though he were not there. The sight of the little bare neck where the ivory of the skin, softly flushed, ran downwards into the shallow V of the green frieze dress, caused something to snap in his brain.

"You won't. You won't. . . . Listen . . . I know all about you. Do you hear? I know who 'Paddy Mac' is. Do you hear?" He stood back waiting the result of his thrust.

"Do you hear me? I know who 'Paddy Mac' is. I know who the traitress is that used the love of a good man to get her dirty information with which to stab him in the back and to stab the movement he represents. . . . You are the traitress that wrote those articles in the *Meteor*."

"Of course I wrote the articles and would write them again. You say I love Creegan. If I loved him better than life I'd criticise him—only because I loved him. And you, who know so little about me, know that. I have never pretended to be a Syndicalist. And now perhaps you'll tell me what secrets I have disclosed." The girl was perfectly cool.

Well, what secrets had she disclosed? And it was true. He knew this girl. There was a contrary devil in her—he had it in himself—which would make her criticise her own lover just because he was her lover.

He searched vainly for the intensity of his resentment—the criticism was brutal—but was it? He himself had often been a brutal critic of the politicals—it was the word they always applied to him. . . . But it was unfair. Yes, that was the word, it was "unfair."

These things ran tumultuous through his brain. The

girl was smiling at him—a little close smile. It unnerved him. His control went.

"If you don't agree at once to go and stop Creegan, I'll tell him who you are." He was speaking quietly enough now.

The girl's face showed no signs of emotion. She was putting her writing materials carefully into a long leather portfolio. Her little round helmet straw she put on her head. She had picked up her gloves.

"What are you going to do?" he asked.

"I'm going to tell Brian Creegan now that I am 'Paddy Mac.' That's all." She walked out of the room leaving him staring at the closed door.

He hung in the wind a few moments, when the door opened, and his *fiancée* walked in. "They told me at the Hall, Denis, that you were coming here, where they could telephone you if you were wanted. I felt I had to come along at once to talk over one or two things with you."

Destin, still dazed, looked at her. "What do you want to talk about?" he said, a little ungraciously.

"Now, my dear boy musn't be like that," she said, passing a little firm arm through his, and looking pleadingly into his face. She did not see the hard look in his eyes.

"I have come, Denis, to save your life," she began mysteriously.

"To save my life? What do you mean?"

"I am a girl at heart you know—I can be hard, but I have my soft moments—and I am frightened."

"What has frightened you?"

"I am frightened of what is coming. Oh! listen to me, Denis." She had clasped his arm convulsively to her breast. "If Creegan sends the strikers into the street, the soldiers will kill them. And you can't turn Brian Creegan."

"Why don't *you* try?" he asked, bitterly.

"I? Oh! Denis, you know Creegan hates me. Now he is mad—is he not? And you are not obliged to follow a madman. Everything has changed in the last forty-eight hours. The streets are full of police and soldiers and they mean trouble. Don't you see how it is?"

"What do you mean?" he asked roughly. "Speak plainly if you want me to understand."

"Well, Denis, I want you to protest against this useless bloodshed. I'. . . I want you to stand out from it all. They will shoot you, Denis—they will shoot you"—the voice was trembling—"or they will put away my beautiful, strong Denis for ten years—perhaps for life."

"You want me to desert the men in the hour of their need?"

"No, not that. I want you to protest. Once I could have faced your going through with it, but not now. You have turned me into a woman." The girl was clinging to him, frightened, her beautiful eyes tear-drenched.

But this emotion roused the contrary spirit in her *fiancé*. He loosened her hold on his arm and said quietly:

"Make your mind easy. I am not going to fall in the streets shot like a dog. I have protested, and what is more, I have left the Syndicalists and joined the politicals. I am a member of McGraw's wing of the National Workers' Party—the Independent Socialists."

"Oh! Denis, is that true?" Her hands were clasped in thankfulness. "I am delighted." A look of pain passed across his face.

"I hope you don't think it is too easy," he said ironically. "I have turned my back on the best man in the world and on the movement in which I fleshed

my virgin lance. I have become what people will call a turncoat. I have gone over to Creegan's nearest enemies."

"But, Denis — Syndicalism is not what it was. Damascene made it all seem so different when he first explained it. Now that it comes to the actual brutal struggle, it is not the same thing. And Denis," she added as an afterthought, "you can be an M.P. now."

Destin's heart leaped in spite of himself. He had not thought of that. The appeal to Parliament—the great sounding board of Westminster—the megaphone voice—the chance to make himself heard—all these things came sweetly to him, especially as what he had done he had done conscientiously. It meant Power.

And it was natural after all that his *fiancée* should wish him to have a bigger arena for his talents. It was a woman's way.

He put it from him with an effort. He had not done this thing for the flesh-pots of Parliament.

But the girl before him had seen the effect of her words. "Now they will have to listen," she said. "No more reports in little tin trumpets like the *Bugler*, but in the great dailies. Denis, you were marked for big things. I saw it the first day I met you at Chillington House. The Duchess saw it.

"And now, dear, I am going to be very hard and businesslike." She had linked herself to him again. "I am going to be unmaidenly or whatever the Philistines call it. . . . I want you to marry me soon. Everything goes so well with you, and now will go better. I want you to be my husband soon."

There was infinite seduction in the voice of the young girl. The warm-cool touch of her arm that came to him through the muslin of her dress—the aroma that freed itself from her body—all weakened him.

"I'll marry you when you like," he said; "next month if you will."

It was one of his rare bursts of emotion. All these things with Vesta Craven were called up in bursts of emotion.

The girl placed her little red lips full on his. It was the first display of passion he had ever seen in her. "It is a bargain," she said. "Now let us go to Damascene's trial."

XXI

DAMASCENE'S LAST APPEARANCE ON ANY STAGE

DAMASCENE was to be tried that morning. The Octopus Scandal had drawn in its tentacles and with them the net of iniquity was full.

When they passed into the courts, the atmosphere was stifling with the sweat of bodies, mingled with the perfumes that streamed from the clothes of the society women who sat there sunning themselves before the fires of sin. The Duchess of Chillington, her great dusky fez crowned by a hat on which perched with outstretched wings a white dove, dominated the proceedings with a large fan of black ostrich feathers.

As they entered the court at the tail of the queue where they had stood for an hour, the judge was requesting that all women should leave the court. "I do not insist that they shall do so, but all *ladies*, I am sure, will," he add, almost coyly. "As we near the end of the case, the details are most unsavoury."

Evidently there were no females of the type specified, as not a woman stirred. Vesta Craven snorted as she clung to Destin's arm—"Just think of that old fuzz-wuzz trying to treat women as delicate pets who must not have their little ears contaminated, whilst the rude male brutes can wallow in it." She rubbed one little pink ear absently.

Vesta Craven had always a fine contempt for the conventions.

It had been rumoured that Damascene would not

surrender to his bail, but that he would fly the country, and it was even supposed that in order to save dragging in the mire some of the greatest names in England, this was what the authorities hoped.

At any rate, if that were so, they were disappointed, though not the public, who watched the familiar figure, with the scarlet cloak, despite the intolerable closeness of the court, falling behind the perfect-fitting clothes—the monocle set squarely in the eye, taking in everybody there, and the face, lineless and fresh, exchanging a nod with one or two people. However, it was noticeable that most of the audience who knew Damascene were careful to avert their gaze when he turned the lighthouse of his eye. The Duchess of Chillington, however, with the *sang froid* she had made her own, deliberately returned the bow, to the disgust of her peers. It was the Duchess's boast that she "never went back on a pal."

Courcy was there, propping his lathy form against a bench, whilst scattered through the crowd, purring their acknowledgments, were the young men Destin had already seen at the Hampstead flat and in the Victoria Hall meeting. They at least were not ashamed of their hero. There seemed to be a sort of secret understanding—superior, comfortable, and vain-glorious—between them and the man in the dock, whose hair, Destin noticed for the first time was streaked with grey.

"Damascene might have made his hair up," murmured one of the young men near them, a man with prominent eyes and slavering, sweet mouth. "It will only give the barbarians occasion to scoff, and it is so dreadfully eccentric."

As the case went on to its close, the indictment drew its slimy length around the man in the dock. But Damascene smiled imperturbably, returning a suave and always good-humoured denial to everything; and,

when opportunity offered, running off into little discursions upon art with the cross-examining counsel, the ignorance of whom he seemed to take a malicious delight in exposing.

"I have no God but art," he said. "There is nothing but art. Art is life—the absence of art is death—something, my lord, I fear the gentlemen of the jury will not easily understand."

It was impossible to dislike the man—he was resistless. He established a sort of art-fellowship with friend and foe—an understanding which was delicately flattering. But still, those coils wound themselves closely, ever more closely, around him. The men of his own class might smile with him—might admit him into the camaraderie of class—but they were ruthless as boa constrictors, and the kneading before the final deglutition went on.

The crowd, and especially the fashionable portion of it, appraised the man in the dock as the torturer appraises the victim. They were driven by a horrid curiosity to see whether he was "game"—as a sporting gentleman in a pair of ballooned riding breeches, standing near Destin, expressed it. But the man in the dock gave no sign, save that occasionally with a handkerchief of magenta silk he wiped away some invisible moisture from his forehead.

Now, however, the heat of the place was telling on him. The eyebrows sagged—the cheeks patched themselves—until little by little the man began to sink together. But still through the grimace into which his face had turned, he smiled. Drawn out to the minutest details, he returned constant denial backed by witticism and counter. But as the shadows of the afternoon drew down, the man in the dock changed. He was becoming an old man.

The jury retired. The place was breathless. Dama-

scene was taken out of the dock to await the verdict. The minutes dragged themselves. There was a movement, and the twelve honest citizens, expressionless, presumably shocked out of all consciousness, came back. The judge took up his place, and Damascene was brought into the dock—but a changed Damascene, freshly manicured and polished. The cheeks firm once more—the eyes black and sparkling. The man had been born again.

The judge had no need to ask the question. Everyone saw "Guilty" on the faces of the twelve men. Damascene saw it and placed two plump white hands on the dock rail, a great emerald on the first finger of the left hand shining greenly in the half-lights.

"After a fair and full trial," the judge began sententiously, "you have been found guilty, Sydney Damascene, of the most unnatural of crimes." The people were all looking one way—not at the judge but at the man.

After a homily, edifying and horror-stricken, justice concluded—"I can only hope that the mass of misguided people who call themselves Syndicalists—allied, I believe, to the Socialists—are not as a body tainted with the germs of a vice, which springs as inevitably from its culture-bed of political and mental distortion as the germs of disease spring from ill-regulated and ill-ordered houses. It is the sentence of the Court that you be confined for the term of twenty years."

"*Habet! Habet!*" Destin saw it in every face there.

How would he take it? The face was smiling—imperturbable—as ever. The voice was asking permission to speak, which was given.

"I congratulate a sapient jury upon their judgment of a crime of which doubtless they have an extensive and peculiar knowledge. My crime, my lord, is the only

crime that counts in England—the crime of being found out. If you care to make up a register of what you call 'unnatural vice,' you will find written in it some of the great names of the well-regulated and well-ordered Society which I have outraged—perhaps even of your own noble profession. And now that I have been found out, I am happy to confess not only to what you call my guilt, but my blasphemous belief that there is no such thing as vice and virtue—good and evil. The only vice is the vice of not agreeing with your fellows—the only virtue that of following your inclinations. Your inclination and that of your fellows turns to the unnatural things of the licensed harlotage which you call 'marriage'—mine—to other things which you are pleased to call 'unnatural.'

"I am sure the public who have been fortunate enough to obtain seats for this performance will be gratified at the finale, as this, my lord, is my last appearance on any stage."

He passed his hand quickly over his lips, placing something in his mouth, smiled, and collapsed like a balloon that has been pricked. Two warders ran forward, but it was too late.

It was, as he had said, Sydney Damascene's "last appearance on any stage."

XXII

THE BLINDED GIANT

DESPITE the time, heavy with event, Denis Destin was forced to work day and night on the proofs of his book "The New Revolution," which, in view of his filling the eye of the public at the moment, was being hurried forward. For even so conservative a house as McClinton's did not distain the sweet uses of advertisement.

What made the strain all the greater was the fact that he had to revise much of the latter stages of his book in view of his—not "change" of view, but of his realisation of the change that had been going on inside him for many months.

The book was ambitious. It was a retrospect of the labour forces throughout Europe within the immediate past, with a forecast of the future, and particularly a projection of those giant problems now dimly materialising on the screen of time—problems of which the rank and file of the European democracies were almost entirely ignorant and which their leaders, generally, lacked the imaginative power to grasp.

Now the advance copies had been sent out for review, and morning after morning, he scanned the columns with the eagerness of those early days when he had drawn first blood. Seasoned as he was by now to praise or blame—this was something different—something to make his heart beat faster.

The capitalist press, to his surprise, was, generally

speaking, if not enthusiastic, at least recognisant. The old *Olympian* even gave him a quarter column all to himself, for, as always, anything in the nature of expert work appealed to it, and it even "recommended" its readers "to buy a copy to put on their bookshelves for reference, in these days when so much that is superficial or deliberately misleading is written about the Labour movement." The Nonconformist Liberal dailies were not exactly hostile, but patronising, with a sort of conventicle snuffle about some of their criticisms.

The *Meteor* had apparently ignored him, which depressed, for he knew that the selling of his book largely hung on the *Meteor* with its "largest circulation."

With more assurance he turned to the Socialist papers. Here for the first time, he met the blast of adversity. The *Tocsin*, as a red-hot Syndicalist organ, poured out the vials of its wrath upon "the windy theories of the politician," for the *Tocsin* knew by now of his change. It even said—"Ambitious men of the Destin type, for we will not pretend not to know the antecedents of the author of 'The New Revolution,' are the curse of the revolutionary movement and invariably stray into the pastures of the politician where the lush-grass grows and where they browse, until, fat and stodgy, they rise to be 'Right Honourables' or something of the sort."

The political-labourist papers were on the other hand heavily indifferent to that part of his book which dealt with the growing power of Syndicalism amongst the Latin races, and turned with avidity to the part dealing with the advance by political action. The powerful analysis of psychology in relation to tactic, which to Destin was the heart of his book, they simply ignored, either not understanding or not caring to understand.

The problems of the future were, with the exception of the *Leader*, the organ of the Independent Socialists, and the *Trumpet*, the organ of the unattached, relegated to the upper air, to the land of "Castles in Spain." Socialism was too much occupied with the immediate to trouble about the abstract. Let the future take care of itself.

A few days later, as he opened the *Meteor* to see about the strike, on the fourth page—the famous *Meteor* fourth page—he saw in big letters—"Denis Destin on 'The New Revolution,'" with underneath a whole two columns of the precious *Meteor* space, enthusiastic and critical, with the initials of the editor himself at the bottom.

The big letters of his name was his franking into the ranks of men who mattered in the opinion of the *Meteor*, even when they were enemies. As always, the Tory organ rose above party when it came to the real thing. It praised and blamed—it scorched and soothed—but it gave the book the advertisement it needed, as was shown by the climbing figures of the sales and the satisfaction of his publishers. Men and women ran to buy it at the bookstalls, and were usually disappointed when they got it. Wildish had said it would be "caviare to the general," and it was.

It was the atmosphere of revolution in which they were living which gave the book its final impetus. That atmosphere which made itself felt in the parks where there grew up silently in the night the mushroom-tents of the soldiers. In the tramp-tramp in the streets. In the silence which brooded over the city ways.

Yet the authorities made no sign. Everything was being done "decently and in order."

Only in Fraternity Hall was there the feverish ebb and flow of life—with ever coming up from the stone floor of the cellar the high clear voice—"Form fours!

By the right there!" But now there came the metallic stamp of rifle-butt.

The sound came to him as he walked in the May evening to the Hall, there to face the special meeting of the Syndicalist Executive, who had demanded from him an explanation of his change of politics and of his resignation from the Direct Actionists, which was now being used by the capitalist papers as a proof of division amongst the Syndicalists themselves, who by now had broken away from the Strike Organisation Committee, as the Trade Union leaders, fearing the movements of troops and the rising temper of the men, were trying to open negotiations with the employers.

"By the right there! Form fours! Quick march!" and the tramp-tramp of nailed feet, but now not so scattered—more orderly.

Creegan, who was standing near the window of the committee room on the first floor, where the executive met, and was looking out into the afternoon shadows, gave him the slant of his shoulder as he came in. Now Destin knew for the first time the meaningless "cold shoulder." In these days of awakening he was always finding new meanings. His attention was minute—scrupulous.

Every man there had been his friend in the years that were now gone for ever. Little Graney, who in a burst of temper at the slowness of the Parliamentary leaders had joined the Syndicalists some two months before, sat in the corner gnawing his moustache and looking hard at Creegan, who had his back to him. Red Fitz, ex-prizefighter, sat back in his chair, his warped hands a-straddle on his knees as though waiting for the call of "Time!" to do battle, the light blue eyes peering out from under their red bushy arches on either side of the twisted flattened nose. Below him, Mac, the

dwarfish, beady-eyed, black-haired tailor, his tie shouting revolution, his toes crooking themselves around the legs of his chair. At the head of the table a little coal-grocer, who in the day served his customers like any petty bourgeois, but at night mouthed defiance to the stars from the top of a box at the street corner, who was now being elected to the chair. Stolid and fiery—fair and dark and mottled. These were the lights of London Syndicalism—the Junta before which he was to make good—if he were able.

"Now, gents, if you're ready," said the chairman, "I'll ask Mr. Destin to explain his position. It is not for me to stand between you and the . . . er . . lecturer . . . no, I mean the accused . . . no, I don't mean that—I mean the object of the meeting. . . ." He stammered and broke down.

Destin pushed back his chair. In this moment, he was shorn of his strength—the strength which came from his hatred of the enemies of labour. These were his comrades of yesterday—might be his comrades tomorrow. Hostile he felt them, but the anger that sent him flaming and tempered and cold-hot against the capitalist was absent here. The powerful head, with the growth of wavy hair brushed back, with the grey hairs now showing through it, was set, not a trifle back as at the Magog meeting, but came a trifle forward—a little sunk. These were the men he loved—to whom he felt, though so much younger, a protector who wished to save them from themselves.

But Creegan, who had now taken his seat next the chairman, was staring at him in a way he had never seen before. It came to him like a douche—it nerved him for the ordeal. He began to speak, scarcely hearing his own voice, until the machinery of tongue began to move.

He started—"Comrades"—("Not comrades," mur-

mured Creegan). "I said 'comrades'"—Destin looked round defiantly—this was the whip he needed. Nobody looked at him, but nobody resented it.

"Comrades—there is no man here who can say I have ever been anything else than a good comrade—a staunch comrade." ("Hear-hear!" piped Graney.) "When I entered the movement, I threw in my lot with the Syndicalists because, like you, I believed the only path to power was, in the long run, over the barricade. Like you, I saw and see the weakness of the right wing of the politicals. I have not come here to make excuses either for myself or for that right wing. For the other, the militant-political wing led by McGraw, to which I now belong, I offer no excuse. There is none to offer."

"'Militant-politicals.' 'Ear 'im," sneered a voice from the table.

"To-day I believe in the strike, in direct action, still," went on Destin ignoring the voice, "but only as the left hand of Labour. I believe the strike alone is a two-edged sword which may or may not hurt the employer, but which in its back-swing is capable of lopping the head of Labour itself. I have been coming to this for many months. I fought, God knows, against the new ideas as hard as any Conservative—we are all conservatives at heart. The realisation came to me the morning Brian Creegan and I walked in the park, where we saw the city that rose in the night—the city of soldiers. It was the lift of the Big Stick.

"I had seen it before twice. Once at the Great North-Western Conference, where the stick was held over our heads. Once before that in the Trafalgar Square protest meeting about Joe Lanthorne, the engine driver, where the orderly, deadly forces of the law breakwatered the mob; where every building was the hiding place of the police; and where in the background

at the barracks, the redcoats waited to be loosed at the signal.

"It was Force's reply to Force.

"Those things pulled me up—scared me—but I put them on one side. I belonged to the revolutionary, not to the evolutionary school. (Many men damn themselves, and others, for a word.) The proletariat was going to march to victory, and in the twinkling of an eye would seize the reins of power and change everything—would beat the armed forces of the law to the ground and bring Society around to its side and make Society good by Act of Parliament whether it liked it or not—would in fact force its views upon Society—that Society against which it rebelled because it wished to force its views upon the Democracy. Where is the difference?"

He turned to look at the faces before him. They were all listening closely, but were silent. Only Creegan kept his face down as he stabbed the table before him with the blade of a clasp knife.

"Now you are about to make your final appeal to force in the supreme end of Syndicalism—in the armed General Strike. Look at the facts and let us forget that we are either Syndicalist or Political. Look at the facts." It was Destin's Irish persuasiveness—the persuasiveness that none could resist.

"Supposing you could count upon the four millions now out on strike—supposing you could count on them to the last man—and you can't—you would still be beaten. If the employers would let the strike proceed by passive resistance—would let you hang up indefinitely the national machinery—well and good. Sooner or later, to save itself from bankruptcy, and always providing you yourselves could hold out long enough, the Masters, that is the Government, would have to give in. But the Masters will do nothing of the kind.

"To-day I learn—it doesn't matter how"—(Creegan had straightened himself and was looking closely at the speaker) "that the troops you have seen are to line the streets of London—thirty-five thousand of them—to convoy food handled by 'blacklegs' from the docks. That was Winterhurst's idea if it is any satisfaction to you, and Winterhurst doesn't do these things without thinking everything out to the last hair."

"Winterhurst's not the world," said Creegan, jerking sullenly into his speech.

"No," replied Destin, "but he's a good big slice of it at the moment." He went on:

"If you still remain passive—well and good—you will not be brought into conflict with the armed forces of the law—but in that case your strike has failed. If you resist the transport, you bring the Big Stick down on you in a moment and we shall have battle, murder, and sudden death in our streets." (He paused to see the effect of his words—there was something painful in the way his audience were listening now.)

"Now, even if all the four millions throughout England unite in resisting by force the army, navy, and police—will they win? You know—I know—the officer below there whose words come to us here, knows, that they will be dispersed like foam of the wave—scattered before the death-rattle of the rifle and the Maxim. You know—even Creegan there really knows—they will fire on us. If they are called on to shoot, they will shoot with just as much compunction as a well-drilled machine—no more and no less. The conscience of the mass is another conscience than the consciences of the individuals composing it. Creegan ought to know that."

"It is a lie," said Creegan. "They won't fire. They

are our comrades. They are bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh." The voice cut raucously across the speaker's. "I know my class."

"Destin is right," came a voice in thin irony from the bottom of the table. "I know my clawss." It was Graney. Somebody laughed.

"Can you fight the British army? Can you fight the British policeman? Can you fight the British navy?" Destin went on passionlessly. Even Creegan was silent.

"And you can't depend upon four millions. You can't depend upon four hundred thousand. You can only depend upon the Grand International with its three hundred thousand and upon the flotsam and jetsam of the city streets who will come up like dirty scum upon the tide of revolution. For, as you know, the Strike Organisation Committee has decided to ask the men to keep out of the streets whilst they open negotiations with the employers."

"The Masters have refused to negotiate," said Red Fitz, heavily. "They say—'Go back or be bashed.'"

"We are going on alone," boomed Creegan.

"Now, gents, let's get on with the business of the meeting," said the little grocer in the chair. "No back talk." He looked very fierce. Something like a smile trembled on Creegan's face and flickered out.

"We are discussing matters of life and death," the chairman went on sententiously.

"Of death, you mean," said Graney.

"Shut your lip, Graney," said Creegan menacingly, "or I'll give you some more Victoria Hall."

"Afride of you, Creegan," said the little man coming to his feet like a bantam cock. "Afride of you, you bullocky Irisher!"

"Now, gents," said the chairman, pounding the table, "this isn't a night at the National Sporting you

know. Sit down, Graney." There was fire in his eye. Graney resumed his seat, scowling at Creegan.

"And you, Brian Creegan—I'm ashimed of you, leading up to a breach of the peace." Creegan sat abashed like a great child caught in some naughtiness.

"Now to get back to business," went on Destin, who had stood unruffled through all this. "Where does this leave us?

"It means that Democracy is thrown back on the vote as its chief road of advance, using the strike only to hamper the capitalists as opportunity offers, to dislocate business, and never to prolong it long enough to bring the forces of the Crown into operation—to bring the Big Stick."

"Don't quote from your 'New Revolution,'" growled Creegan. "You talk like a book, not like a red-blooded man."

Destin, unmoved, went on. "These are the facts. Can they be set aside? If they can, I am willing to change my mind."

"You are an adept at changing your coat or your mind," sneered Creegan.

Destin ignored him. "That means that we must grasp the reins of power—of political power—of Parliamentary power. We can only do that by education—people always get the Government they deserve. No government, even if it would, can advance one inch beyond the educational status of the democracy. Yet democracy itself is the great educator and must be the educator because it is the nursery of Government as of all other things.

"You revolutionists think," said Destin, gradually passing from defence to attack, "that all the proletariat has to do is to man the barricades, defeat the armed forces of Society, take over the reins of Government—

that Government which you hate, because all government means politics—and in some unexplained way, revoluntionise Society, making it happy and contented whether it will or no. All this without intermediate stage—without that education which is the essential of all progress. You imagine that because the Governments of the time are ignorant—painfully ignorant—like the democracy which elects them, and that because you come brimming with ideas and ideals, you can change everything, again always forgetting that the Governments are elected by the people and that the people get always the government they deserve.

"Can you not see that the political battle is the eternal battle—that when you have entered the New Jerusalem, there will always be revolution in her streets—in the golden ways, and that as the Socialists seize the reins of power, they in their turn become the Conservatives of party embattling themselves with the newer and younger spirits who wish for new roads and new methods? This is the eternal battle between the right and left wings, even after Socialism becomes an accomplished fact.

"Have you not learnt"—(Destin was now the accuser) 'have you not learnt that new and tremendous problems have been loosed over the democracies of the world by the recent war—and this long before Society reaches the communist or co-operative stage? In the forefront is the question of militarism. Have we any unity upon that? Is the whole European International of one mind? Has it been decided in every country that never again shall the representatives of the proletariat in Parliament or Reichstag or Chamber of Deputies, vote a halfpenny for war or war material? Are we even agreed upon the question of universal disarmament? Have we even a war policy—the most essential of all things for organised Social Democracy? Are we for

or against colonisation and the absorption of small nationalities? Are the Socialist parties of the world agreed unanimously that it is or is not right for Socialists to sit in Capitalist ministries?

"Or, taking something of the very immediate present, with the swing of Latin Syndicalism towards militarism and nationalism since the outbreak of the recent war, are the Syndicalists themselves agreed?"

He had stopped. The faces of the men before him showed doubt, anger—even fear. Graney was holding the edge of the table in his hands, craning to each sentence. It was a new earth that Destin was opening to them.

"But passing from the present—how many of you who speak glibly of the new revolution—who talk about abolishing all competition and substituting co-operation—have thought of the newer, fiercer competition that co-operation will unloose? Of the competition, not for the bread and butter of life, but for the fountain of life itself—the arts, sciences, yes, even in the realm of the super-physical? when the minds of men are freed from the moil and toil of the bread-battle—the fight for that bread which will be manufactured automatically by the machinery of those days—when man has conquered the machine, instead of being conquered by it?

"Or have you thought of the race problems now expanding before the gaze of a half-awakened Europe? What about the challenge of the East—of the eight hundred millions of yellow and brown men—which has already begun—of a 12-hour day worked for sixpence against an 8-hour day worked for anything from eight shillings to forty, as you take the European or American wage-standard?

"Do you know that even now the Masters have threatened to bring the first of the yellow flood to break your strike as they did in South Africa a generation

ago? Do you know anything of the preparations now being made in China and in her schoolmaster Japan, to drive European goods out of the market by sheer number and endurance-force—a challenge to be backed when the time comes by the bayonet and bullet?

"And are you Syndicalists, who have cut and dried everything, decided how organised White labour will meet the new challenge, when you cannot even decide to admit coloured men to your Unions in those White countries where they live? How are you going to keep up the White Life-Standard before the coming Yellow and Brown invasion?

"And with these terrific problems confronting you, you wish to throw away the little you have so tortuously won and have been losing, for the statistics prove beyond question that allowing for certain municipal schemes, the European workers' life-standard has declined within the twenty years before the war—you propose to put your unprotected head in the lion jaws of Society. You wish to invite the whiff of grape which will not only leave you but Europe helpless in the face of the Yellow Shadow.

"But whether you Syndicalists invite the avalanche—whether the present strike is stamped out by the red nobs of Society and the Democracy of to-day goes down in blood and tears—Democracy itself is deathless. Once more—a hundred times more—it will lift itself from its belly and raise its blinded eyes towards the light. Democracy is bigger than Syndicalism—it is bigger even than Socialism—it is the biggest, the most certain thing in the world—it is Evolution itself with the Will behind."

Destin sat down abruptly, his face flushed, his fighting spirit roused. He had passed from the position of accused to that of accuser. Some of the men before him

were breathing hard as though they had been running—some stolid—some uncomprehending.

Creegan stood up.

"You coward!" he said.

"I am no coward," said Destin, "but I am frightened all the same."

"You're a traitor. You've sold the pass," went on Creegan. "Now listen to me."

He reached upwards, the end of his extinguished cheroot forgotten between his lips. He remembered it and spat it out on the floor angrily as though it stopped his free expression.

"You all know what I stand for—force—physical force. You know 'tis for the bullet I stand and not the ballot. You know that I believe, and all history has shown it, that the classes will never yield to the masses by intellectual persuasion. If we ever got hold of the Parliamentary machine, I tell ye, if they could not crook it from us they would shoot it from us. Let our trial of strength come now. I don't believe the soldiers will fire on their own comrades.

"If they shoot, let them pay the price, and 'tis a terrible price they'll have to pay. Let us meet them now in the streets. Let us commence *sabotage* as Madame Satalia has suggested. Like our French and Italian comrades, let us wreck the railways and the public buildings. Let us lay their towns in ruins and out of the ashes and the blood let us build the fair city of to-morrow. Let us have hell and bring heaven out of it.

"My own people, the Irish, will fight. I can pledge myself on them. Faith 'tis they that have more revolution to the square inch than the whole of the rest of the United Kingdom. They are the boys to lead a revolution. When the Grand International gives the lead, it is little the Trades Unionists outside will heed

the voices of their coward chiefs. Victory is ours. We'll go full steam ahead. If Society is knocked into smithereens, so much the worse for Society.

"We have four millions of men out. Can they fight four millions? Not a man has black-legged on us—ratted on us. The mass of the workers will follow us and not the political scally-wags who have pulled down the red flag. And anyhow, the Government cannot move its troops or get supplies to them.

"Oh it's true that here and there men can rat from us—like that man there"—he turned contemptuously towards Destin—"but the mass are true. Each for all and all for each!

"Before he talks of yellow Chinese let him explain his own yellow heart—before he talks of challenges, let him examine his own challenge to his old comrades. The soldiers will not fire I say—if they do, we have their answer for them below there." He pointed downwards to the cellar, from where came the tramp of men.

That was the right spirit. The men before him could understand these concrete things—they hated abstractions. Of course it was all moonshine. Let Destin stick to his books—they were dealing with facts, not printed words. "To hell with theory!" Red Fitz said.

But little Graney from the end of the table said—"No blighted fear. Destin has the dog by the right end—the business end. We have the brute by the tail."

Creegan spat on the floor.

A wave of uncertainty passed over the faces of the men at Graney's remark. After all, Graney was a level-headed little devil. There might be something in it. And Destin had been all right until this political business had got hold of him. . . . On the other hand, Creegan ought to know. He had always been right.

The men were wavering, when the windows rattled. There came the boom of a distant drum to their ears in the gathering shadows. . . . Now cutting through it plaintively came the pipes. It drew closer until the space before the Hall was full of people, the place hollow to the beat of drum and the skirl of the war-pipes.

In front came the fife and drum band of the Invincibles, the long-legged drummer twirling his sticks as though possessed, the red flag of revolution carried at the head. Behind strode half a dozen pipers, the green ribands from their pipes flying in the breeze. The waves of people who hung on their heels were dirty and ragged, but they cheered deafeningly for "The Revolution."

The others had run to the window at the drum, save for little Graney, who still sat hunched in his chair, leaving Destin there, forgotten.

Destin passed out of the room alone.

XXIII

THE BIG STICK

WINTERHURST, as Home Secretary, had placed London in a strait jacket. The first convoy of food from the docks, handled by the labour "black-legs," was to go through this fine May morning when Destin and McGraw, still hoping to hold back the people from the armed men, walked down past the Bank of England towards Fraternity Hall.

Winterhurst's grip was everywhere. The announcement of the convoy had been made quite openly in the papers of the previous day, when "all law-abiding citizens" were warned to keep away from the route to the city. They walked in the centre of a fairway lined, as though for a Royal procession, with brown, hard-faced young men, some of them boys, who marked the curbstone in khaki intervals. Winterhurst had said—"The Government deprecates the use of force and indeed believes that no force will be necessary—*but the food is going through.*"

"The food is going through." It was "Winterton's way," which the-man-in-the-street had come to know and admire.

They heard the tramp of feet, and a regiment of Guardsmen, crimson, black, and steel, moved past, led by a distinguished-looking man, whose bearskin passed high over the heads of the men on the curbstone, the broad scarlet stripe of the leg moving evenly beside the narrower stripes of the men. It was the perfection of the man-machine.

"Winterton's Invincibles," said McGraw in his dour Scottish way, taking his curved briar from his mouth for the moment to say it.

They found themselves stopped at the entrance to Leadenhall Street—stopped by a cordon of police who seemed to have come up out of the ground. The moment before, the way had been free. Now the big men, their capes rolled at their sides, barred the road impassively.

Forced to detour, they walked down Gracechurch Street, but on coming out opposite the Monument, the top a sheaf of burnished spears in the quiet sun of the early morning, they saw another line of policemen straddling Eastcheap, with a couple of files of men in khaki in the background, their boy-officer passing slowly up and down before them as though the affairs of empire lay heavy on him.

"There come the other Invincibles," said McGraw, pointing the smoking stem of his pipe the length of Eastcheap.

As Destin turned, something thrilled on the morning air. The windows of the office near him rattled. Then the beating of a drum and the piercing notes of the fifes playing "The Night that Larry was Stretched," the marching-tune of the Invincibles.

"Atten-shun!"

The men in khaki had stiffened.

The little body, uniformed with green caps and green sashes, at their head a red flag, swung along the emptiness of the street. Fringing them on either side was a floating rabble, a little boy, with tow-coloured hair, strutting in front of them. The long-legged, red-headed drummer whom Destin had seen a few days before opposite Fraternity Hall, was still twirling his sticks in fancy swings, now under, now over, the handles glittering as they turned.

The space had narrowed to a hundred yards, but still they came on. Now they were playing "The Red Flag," marching with a slower, steadier gait, singing as they came:

"With heads uncovered swear we all
To bear it onward till we fall.
Come dungeon dark or gallows grim
This song shall be our parting hymn. . . ."

Behind, a chorus had swelled as though the diapasons of a great organ had been drawn out. But it was a disciplined chorus, bursting from thousands of throats together. It came from something back there they could not see.

The soldiers made no sign, contenting themselves with standing in the middle of the way.

The drum took a deeper note, the fifes a higher. The space was narrowing, when McGraw took a quick resolution.

"Now or never!" he said. "There will be ugly work in a moment if we can't stop them. Come on."

He ran forward at the double through the lines of blue and khaki like a young man, with Destin behind him. As they ran, they heard cheers breaking out raggedly from behind the band and caught the gleam of the sun on something shining back there in the blackness of people that flowed down the channel of the street like storm-water.

"Where is Creegan?" panted McGraw as he came up with the man carrying the red flag.

"Stand out of the way McGraw!" He threw it at him over his shoulder as he passed.

They were almost on the police, who passing through the khaki lines had loosened their batons, when Destin saw Graney trying to reach him out of the press.

"Graney, stop them for God's sake! The soldiers are waiting for you."

Graney, with an exclamation, ran to the head, and in the last twenty yards turned to face the oncoming multitude, holding his sparse arms, scarecrow-like, to stop them, and seizing the staff of the flag. The leading files seeing Graney's badge as marshal hesitated a moment, but the big drummer, by this time maddened, took another flourish of his sticks as the music petered out. In a moment Graney had run between the two foremost men and had clutched his arm.

The big man shook him off as though he had been a rat and raised his drumsticks. "On boys!" he shouted, and brought the sticks down one after the other. The fifes took up the tune again and on the crowd rushed, surging around them from both sides like a wave that overruns a rock in the ocean.

"Open out!" It was Creegan.

The bandsmen opened out, leaving a thin channel between them. Something ran along the channel—a long line of powerful men who broke through the thin blue line of police without feeling them and were into the khaki line before the officer knew what was happening. They brushed on and over them, forming steadily on the other side to the word of command as they came out, whilst behind them the pressure grew. The crowd came on, unseeing.

Now they were passing down King William Street. Destin had been swept off his feet, helpless, and as they broke through he had found himself mingled with the head of the column as it formed itself under the quick, high command of Creegan.

The band coming at the tail of the rush, re-formed, the scattered police and soldiers not trying to stop them. Again the boom of the drum and the scream of fifes rose on the air, and for the first time Destin saw that each man of the Invincibles was armed with rifle and bayonet.

Creegan walked before, breaking step, his figure dominating the crowd, his hat set at a ferocious slant. His face was the face of the new Creegan—the omnipotent Creegan before whose blast the walls of Jericho should go down.

But Destin made a last attempt. "Brian! Brian!" He had managed, battered as he was, to reach him.

"Stop it, Creegan! Stop it! The soldiers are waiting at the Bank. They are waiting."

Creegan wheeled and lashed at him. It caught Destin fairly on the side of the jaw. He felt his senses going and his mouth filling with something which came salt to the taste. He reeled on to the first rank which threw him from man to man like a foam bubble until he was on the fringe of the human wave.

With a vague idea of stopping the thing that was coming, he strove to keep up with the crowd. The drum was beating itself out against the walls of the high offices, the fifes shrilling, the sweating faces of the men blowing downwards as though to blow on the fires of hate. The crowd swept on behind, not seeing and not knowing where they were heading. Only movement—movement—movement. On! It did not matter where. But on!

He felt the pressure relax—found himself forced outwards into a sort of eddy where the corner of King William Street lapped Lombard Street.

Somebody was half-edging him, half-carrying him out of the rabble. He found himself against a ladder. "Now," came a high voice. It was Graney.

"Up 'ere—'ere!" it came in sharp command. Destin felt himself half-dragged, half-climbing the ladder of a scaffolding which reared itself against the house on the Lombard Street corner. As they threw themselves on the first staging, the ladder by which they had climbed was swept away by the crowd.

"Thort I knew what to do," said Graney triumphantly. "I 'ope Creegan gets 'is bloomin' 'ead broke for this morning's work," he added vindictively. "I came along with 'em to try and stop 'em, but it was fair arskin' for it."

They climbed the high stages until they found themselves looking down from the height of the fifth storey at the people who swarmed like bees beneath them.

Destin cleared his eyes and his mouth, spitting a stream of red blood on the boarding. "He caught you orl right, mate," said Graney. "That bullocky Irisher can 'it. I know—I've 'ad some.

"Now there's going to be 'ell with the lid off," he said, sententiously, looking down.

Destin for the first time understood the weight of the rush behind Creegan. In front, marching in fairly good order, Creegan, unarmed, leading them, strode the Invincibles, whose only regimental was a band of red around the left arm. There were perhaps a couple of thousand of them. They were armed with all kinds of rifles from Sniders to Martini-Henrys, seized chance and Creegan alone knew where, the needle bayonets sticking out incongruously. Behind them came that maddened band, the drummer still twirling the sticks, the reverberations coming upwards to where they crouched.

But behind—behind was the mob, stretching down to the Monument and beyond—a human torrent that grew under the eye, and from everywhere, without cohesion or purpose. Each side alley vomited its contribution to the ruck. Sprinkling it were women and children, the shrill cries of fainting women coming out of the heart of the press which fumed upward to them. Already the very scaffolding on which they lay was shaking under the impact of the stream.

In places, the crowd had packed itself immoveable.

Cries from the front made the crowd sway backwards a moment, only the next, to gather volume and rush forward once more like the crest of a wave dragged by an undertow.

Then his eyes passed to the open space before the Bank of England which held itself grey and peaceful in the light of the morning sun, like some old rock against which the elements spend themselves vainless. Before the main entrance the Guards regiment he had seen was standing in ruled lines. Policemen were marching in like automata. On the entrances to Princes Street and Cheapside and Queen Victoria Street cordons of khaki held the ring clear as though for a public spectacle.

As he looked, he saw a figure come out on the steps of the Mansion House in cocked hat and robes. It held a paper before it and moved its lips and head and then disappeared.

He was looking at a marionette show with some invisible power working the strings.

As he disappeared, Destin saw Creegan throw up his hand. The men halted. There was a stiffening of the Guardsmen. Before them a doll-figure nodded its head quickly as though the unseen mouth was moving. The men had brought their rifles to the ready. Another movement of the head, and they had brought them to their shoulders. Now, Creegan's men had debouched into three lines, the front lying down on the macadam, the second kneeling, and the third standing. As something inconsequent but particular, he noticed that one man was lying in a pile of dung.

The place was silent. The shouting of the crowds behind broke thinly as though against some invisible barrier as it reached the open space.

Then as the hand of the doll rose stick-like, ready to fall with the signal to fire, he saw a woman break

from the crowd at the side and run between the opposing lines of men, her hands outstretched as though to stop the slaughter. The hand seemed to tremble, then fell unwavering. A crackle came to his ears.

The girl's hands had come down convulsively at the first spatter, as she turned and fell in the roadway. From the ranks of the Invincibles poured a scattered fire. Then the people fell shadow-like on the roads, flecking the macadam. A woman at the side tumbled over on her face screaming in a high piping voice like a wounded hare, clutching her belly with her hands as though to staunch the life-blood of her unborn child. The lines were converging at the double, the bayonets gleaming. A figure had broken from the ranks of the Invincibles as they swept up.

Destin was holding to the edge of the boarding, staring at the speck that lay between.

The sleek dark head and white neck had fallen brokenly forward in the dust, where he caught the emerald green of the dress.

It was the Green-eyed Girl.

In that moment the scales fell from his eyes.

XXIV

THE BURSTING OF THE BUBBLE

DESTIN lay on his scaffolding throughout the day, waiting for Graney, who had slipped down to bring back the news.

He had seen the bayonets of the Guardsmen glittering, the lifting of the Invincibles, and the impending clash over the body of the girl. There was the roar of waters in his ears as darkness fell about him.

When his senses came to him, the sounds of battle were already dying away in the distance—there was an occasional rifle crack, and once, he even thought, the stutter of a machine-gun. Now, at the end of the day, as he craned over the parapet, he saw the space below him deserted, with the flare of the arc-lights setting out the shadows—or were they something else? —that lay here and there on the white macadam. The irregular triangle was deserted save for the soldiers who bivouacked across Princes Street and Cheapside.

It was nearly midnight before Graney, his coat bulging, came back with his news.

He groped and pulled out a loaf of bread and a bottle of something which he gave Destin, who drank. The taste nauseated him, but he felt the blood once more flowing through his parched body, whilst a mouthful or two of the new bread, once he had overcome the pain of mastication with his stiffened jaws, now set in a mask of blood, put fresh strength into him.

Graney did not speak, but watched him eat in silence, crouching by his side on the planking.

"Well?" said Destin dully.

"We've got it in the neck this time and no error, mate," said the little man biting his moustache.

"Is . . . is she dead?" he asked, the thing coming to him suddenly. He had forgotten the girl down there as though she were something with which he had no concern.

"She?" asked Graney, puzzled. "Oh! the girl. No, she isn't dead. Not as I know on. They didn't 'arf mangle her with their bloody gunfire—I don't fink. She's a plucked 'un, she is. Got the guts!

"You couldn't stop the Invincibles," he went on, "but Creegan ran out before them and picked her up, breaking his way back through the first rush. They tell me he's been shot through the shoulder—anyhow, he's disappeared with the girl."

"I must go," said Destin, half-rising.

"Wot are yer a-torking abaht? Are you balmy, mate? Do you know they're running in the leaders right and left, and there's a hue and cry after Creegan fit to raise the dead. If you walk dahn that ladder you'll walk into the arms of a copper—that's wot you'll do, and that'll be the end."

"But I didn't lead them—maybe more shame to me," said Destin.

"That don't matter. It was you and me wot brought them up to the scratch, wasn't it, even though we cleared out at the last moment? and Winterhurst's net, blast him! is big enough and blind enough to swallow everything. All's fish that comes to his net to-day."

Destin lay back again. Graney was right.

"You know," went on Graney, "I'm a little feller—I sneaked back here like a shadow—but you're a bullocky big bloke—a regular Irisher."

"You're sure she's not dead?" asked Destin again.

Graney stared at him. "Well, mate—she's a rare plucked 'un and all that, but she's not the only pebble on the beach. There are others. W'y Gawd bless my soul—do ye know wot's been goin' on dahn there?" He pointed vaguely over the edge. "They've knocked a hundred of our fellows cold—with a few women and kiddies who got in the way, as a makeweight, and Gawd knows how many 'ave slunk away to die in their 'oles. The Invincibles fought like hell, but the Maxims were too much for them, and o' course the politicals, like wise men, stayed at 'ome. They've done in nearly half a hundred of the sojers, and they tell me that the remainder of them, left be'ind to fight the food convoy at the docks, 'ave a couple of thahsand buck navvies at work throwing up entrenchments acrawss the streets leading to Tower Hill, and 'ave filled the 'ahses with armed men. They 'ave a terrible lot up there wiv them—every crook and cutthroat aht for to see the fun, and their 'ands fair itching for the pickings arterwards. They did send the coppers agin them but they ate up a score of 'em in a jiff. They'll wait for the sojers.

"But it was in the West that hell broke loose. The capting, 'oo was in charge of the West-end contingent, was shot through the head the first rush. Some of the mob broke awye dahn the Embankment and up Northumberland Avenue. They started a-bashing of the clubs and the peelers, and the West London Syndicalists broke loose to meet them. They've made a fair china shop of Kensington and Piccadilly. It was all that brute Goring.

"I seed that fellow with Winterhurst directing the men in grey from a balcony in the hoperations at Hoxford Circus—but that was at the hend of the dye."

Seeing the look of puzzlement on Destin's face,

he added—"Didn't you know? Goring and the Employers' Defence Union had armed their private braves—middle clawssy blokes who carried a pen in the daytime and at night a bloomin' gun. Seems they had Government powers. Conserkently, every factory and every private 'ahse was packed to the doors with the boys in grey.

"We'd 'ad the boys in blue and the boys in red and khaki—now we're up against the boys in grey. Tork abaht fightin' the British Hempire.

"Some of the Invincibles had got through from the fight arahnd the Bank and tried to join up with the West-end lot, but they were lined up and shot aht o' 'and when cort wiv the firearms smokin' in their 'ands. But even had they 'eld together they 'adn't an earthly. The whole place began to vomit men in blue and khaki and grey—and there was Winterhurst, with Courcy by his side, directing the business as cool as Christmas.

"Well, as I was syin', Goring on a 'orse, looking like a potboiler, was a-urgin' on the boys to the work with the Big Stick. Gawd! it fair sickens me w'en I fink of it. You should a' 'eard the nuts go under the batons—like filberts cracking in a door-jamb.

"And the worst of it was, three-fourths of the mob were no more Syndicalist than you . . . or I for that matter," he added. "They were just the hold-ons of the back-blocks—the scum that rose on the top of the others, aht for plunder. And nah there's no plunder but bloody murder. Some of them are swearing to revenge themselves on Creegan for bringing them into it. Even some of our own men are savage agin him. If he showed hisself nah, I believe they'd do 'im in—some of the worst on 'em.

"But I seed Courcy and he was a torkin' earnestly to Winterhurst in the balcony. 'E didn't like the dirty work and when the Maxims began to play and the

crowd to fall under the bullets, I sor 'im turn awye like this 'ere" (Graney buried his face clumsily in his hands) "as though he couldn't bear the sight. But that devil Winterhurst smiled and went on puffing his long cigar, looking on as though it were a bloomin' circus—and Goring below raging through the press like a mad bull, for by that time 'e'd got off the balcony—he thort they weren't a-doin' of 'em in fast enough.

"This has fair put the kybosh on Direct Action. Syndicalism—phaugh!" Graney snapped his fingers. They cracked hardly under the cold lights. "Direct Action! The barricade! Arter wot 'appened be'ind the barricade at the top of Regent Street, you won't 'ere much tork abaht barricades—not from yours truly, any'ah.

"They hedged the mob into Hoxford Circus, and then I tell you the Maxims got to work in a flaming circle. Then they played on 'em—they played on 'em. The men cursed and some of 'em 'eld up their 'ands, but they went dahn all the same in swathes like the Fuzzy-Wuzzies at Omdurman—I was aht there under Kitchener, you know. . . . Direct Action!" Graney spat over the parapet.

The sounds of distant firing came to them like the crackle of summer lightning.

"I reckon that's the platoon work," said Graney, facing towards the sound. "They're putting 'em up against the wall at the back of the Nelson Column.

"There it goes again." Once more the spatter came to their ears like the breaking of surf upon some distant beach.

"Graney—I'm going down," said Destin, picking himself up from the boarding and going to the edge where the top of the ladder showed itself.

The docker looked at him hard a moment, opened his mouth to speak, and then shut it again.

"You're mad—but if you go—I go," said the little man.

They passed silently down the reaches of the ladderway until they came to the last stage where the ladder had been swept away.

"Better slide the pole," said he. Gently they let themselves over the edge and slid to the ground.

"Who goes there!"

A figure had stepped forward and something was glimmering under the arc-lights.

"Run for Christ's sake!"

Graney had scuttled off down the street, Destin sprinting by his side. There was a rush of footsteps and a report. A bullet sang past. Then another and another. But they had darted down St. Swithin's Lane into Cannon Street.

"Direct action!" said Graney.

He spat again on the pavement.

XXV

DEMOS

THEY passed by devious ways to Graney's lodgings in a street in the Mile End Road district, listening as they went for sounds of firing from Tower Hill; but it was silent over there.

"Waiting for reinforcements I reckon," said Graney. "They'll wait till they've finished the West and come East to-night. Make a clean job on it I reckon. Winterhurst's way."

As they mounted the rickety stairs, Graney muttered —"Wot the 'oly Moses 'ave we 'ere?"

He struck a match. Before him, crouching on the stairs, was a little boy, whom Destin recognised as the boy he had seen in the morning strutting before the Invincibles.

"Nah then, young shaver, wot do you want?"

"Are you Mr. Graney?" the boy asked.

"I am that gent," said Graney solemnly.

"Then I was to give yer this—that's all." He fumbled in his open shirt and drew out a piece of paper.

Graney unlocked the door of his room and walked in. They heard him strike a match. The room, a little East London lodging with a bookshelf in the corner, showed itself bare to the eye. The light from the gas lamp outside came in wanly through the window.

He read the paper, which he handed to Destin.

He knew the writing, the heavy, even writing of the Green-eyed Girl:

"If this reaches you, will you please find Mr. Destin and bring him at once to the place which the bearer will show you. Come now."

"W'ere is it sonny?" asked Graney.

"A couple of streets away," said the boy, "in Love Lane."

"Gor lummy! wot next," said Graney. "Love Lane. That's a nice place to bring up."

They followed the boy down the stairs and made two or three turnings, coming out of a greasy alley-way into a London rookery. A crowd of men and women had collected in the place, some of them looking upwards at the dilapidated façade of the house where the boy had led them, mouthing threats and curses.

The child took them up several flights of stairs, and saying "'Ere y'are," vanished.

"Red Fitz's," said Graney.

Destin knocked. He pushed open the door and found himself in a little whitewashed room, lighted by a single candle, that glimmered from its sticky bed on the window ledge, showing some flesh-coloured pictures of boxers on the walls.

Lying on a meagre sofa before the window, covered by a shawl, was a girl.

He went over, Graney following him, curious.

"Is that you?" said the deep voice he knew so well.

"Yes," said Destin. "I've come."

The girl half raised herself and looked at him so strangely that he dropped his eyes. She seemed to be asking him some question.

"He is there." She pointed through the wall.

Destin knew whom she meant.

"He carried me out of the press and then went down —collapsed, but Red Fitz and another had followed us and brought us here."

"Are you hurt?" asked Destin remembering. It seemed as though these things were unreal. He was constantly waking into something he had forgotten.

"They shot me through the calf." She looked at him and smiled. "Not very romantic, is it? It brought me down, but it is merely a flesh wound. It is bound up and a little painful. But Creegan has it."

"Where is it?"

"He got it through the chest. It seems a piece of bone is pressing on the lung. He must be operated on if we are to save his life, but the only doctor I could trust in London—my friend Doctor O'Flaherty, who has seen him—says he must not stay here. He cannot operate in this place. . . . Listen to that."

The growl in the courtyard came up to their ears—with now a harsher note in it.

"You know some of the people down there have been in the fighting and a couple of men have been killed. Somehow or other the rumour has got about that Creegan is here and they're talking of making him pay for it all. I am afraid for him." The girl's eyes were wide and distressed as she went on:

"The doctor says he will take him into his own house on the other side of Tower Hill and chance the authorities, as he has often chanced them before. He is an old Fenian you know. So I sent for you to help me.

"He" (she nodded towards the next room) "has been delirious all the day off and on, and has made his last confession to a priest.

"Fitz says he thinks he can get a lorry to take him away, but it cannot come nearer than the piece of waste ground at the end of the Lane. We must carry him there in some way before the break of day. The lorry will be waiting."

A knock came to the door, which was filled by Fitz.

"'E's a-goin' off his rocker miss, but e's come to, now, and he wants to speak to yer. He's like a bloomin' byby. Won't be satisfied but he must see you."

The girl looked at Destin. "I must go to him. I must go to Brian."

Of course the woman must go to her lover—to the man who had saved her. That was natural. But he felt chilled.

As the girl rose stiffly from her couch, resting her body on the crook of his arm, he caught the fragrance of her hair. It seemed like an old memory—a memory of something he had known in the long past, but it left a dull pain behind it.

She limped to the door and went out into the dirty passage, pushing open the door of the next room.

The man was lying in a sort of long black box—so like a coffin that for the moment she stopped. It was Red Fitz's bed, knocked together from the boards of soap-boxes and painted black.

The May moon was the only light there, flooding the room and lighting the face of Creegan into a glistening pallor.

He made an unavailing gesture to the little upturned butter-box near the bed. She sat down.

"You've come."

"Yes," she said, the ivory of her face showing clear in the moon rays, "I've come. What can I do for you Brian? You must be good now and come with us—for a little operation that will cure you."

"Listen," said the man on the bed. "I'm dyin' of something that the doctor can't cure—I'm dyin' of what the people call a broken heart. I usen't to believe in that sort of thing—I thought it was a way of speakin'. Now I know different. I know so many things different." He turned wearily, his eyes large and bright.

"Now don't be thinkin' I'm raving—for I have me

senses all right—I am not dark. But all the same, I didn't think to die like a rat in a hole."

"You shan't die Brian," she said, taking the hand that lay, listless, over the rough edge of the box.

"Hush alannah!" He spoke as he might to a child. "My time has come. There isn't a Creegan that didn't know it. Ye ought to know as an Irishwoman that we have 'the sight.' Me time has come, but I don't want to pass over before I say something. . . .

"Ye know long ago when I was a little *gossoon* in Ireland I used to have me dreams of a time when everything would be beautiful on earth. I saw the 'good people' everywhere—on the moonlight nights they used to come to me in through the window of the old tenement house. I saw them things like a child. . . .

"When I grew to a man—I saw the Vision—but it was a man's vision. The Voices used to come to me in the night, and sometimes the Things. . . . I tell ye I have seen them many a time plainer than I see your face there foreninst me. And they told me of the things to come—yes, and sometimes they told me of this . . . but I wouldn't listen to them. I heard them that day in the Strand when I left the meeting which decided the Strike. Denis Destin was with me that day—Denis . . . him that once I loved better than all things but one.

"And they showed me the time when all men and women should be free—when the angels of God would walk the earth and not stay up in heaven—when the golden kingdom would come down to men. They showed me the time when the common people—the poor people, of the world would rise—when the graves of the past should give up their dead to cast off their shrouds and stand upright in the sun of the morning, fearless before the new day and the new age. But they didn't show me the way.

"But I saw the way. I saw the red flag and the barricade and the rifle. I saw that force must be met by force—that the people must rule those others who would hold them chained. . . . And I saw that other vision—the streets running with blood—the blood of the martyrs—with the blood of their enemies—and out of the fusion a new world rising fairer than the old.

"And then you came. . . ." The man's voice had sunk very low. "Then you came, and the spirit had taken flesh, and the first of the Vision fulfilled was shown to me.

"I tell ye now—it is my last confession that I am makin' to you—that I loved ye from the moment I saw ye walk into the Transport Workers. And to me you were my mother and sweetheart and friend. And even once, had you asked, I would have given you the moon and stars—have plucked down the planets from their courses to light you to glory and honour. . . . But that is over now.

"And sometimes I thought—sometimes—one time—that maybe you would look on me, Brian Creegan, and that together we would lead the hosts of the people through the gates of the New Jerusalem—into the city of light—that you would—God forgive me—be the queen of heaven on earth, as Mary is of the heaven above.

"But you would not . . . and you will forgive me that."

The girl was bending very close to him. The voice had taken a higher, a feverish, note. The eyes had brightened.

"But that is all finished now . . . that is all finished. When I was a little boy playing 'The Bould Sea Rover' and 'I am the King of the Castle' and the other ould games—God be with the times!—and me mother would

say—'Brian, why is it alannah that your pinny is dirty?' or may be . . . yes, but your dress isn't dirty alannah . . . what is it I am sayin'? What is it? . . . Listen. I hear the Voices again. . . ."

The man tried to sit up, but fell back. The girl put out her hand to wipe away the sweat that had gathered on his face, on which two great tears fell as she bent over him.

He had lifted himself again and was staring through the window at the white moon.

"The Voices! The Voices! . . . Yes boys—over the barricade! Yes, give it to them! Now all together! . . . God strike you! What is it you are doin' there Patsy! Now boys, together! . . ." Again he fell back.

The girl ran into the passage. "Get him out of the place quick. It's time. The day has broken."

"How will we lift him? How can we get him away from here with those bloodhounds downstairs and the police watching for him?"

She looked despairingly around the room. Her eye fell on the box.

"Listen," she said. "I have it. The bed he's in is like a coffin. We'll cover it with something and take it down the stairs. If we are stopped, we can say that he's dead—that his corpse is in it."

"But suppose the police stop us?" asked Destin.

"Not much fear of the cops," said Graney. "They've taken nearly every cop in London for the work dahn there." He pointed out through the window. "If we can get through that little lot in the court, we're pretty safe."

"We have to chance something if we're to save Creegan's life," added the girl. "Where can we get something black like a pall? A shawl would do—anything."

Fitz ran out of the room, returning with the big black shawl which had covered her on the sofa. She took the shawl and laid it over the now unconscious man who lay there stiffly.

"Now," said Destin shortly.

They lifted up the box and carried it to the door, Fitz at the feet and Graney and Destin at the head, lifting it with ropes they had run underneath.

It was heavy. They struck every angle of the stairs, in one place carrying away a yard of the crazy bannisters.

As they came out, they saw the crowd of people in the court had increased.

"He's dead," said Destin. "Make way there."

The crowd parted sullenly. But one woman, her hair streeling down her face, stuck a red arm on her hip and said—"Blarst 'im! serve 'im right! It's he that 'as sent my Jim to 'is death this day afore the sojers."

"Stand back!" said Fitz, "and if one of you follow, strike me white if I don't paralyse 'im—or '*er*," he added significantly. "Do we want every bloody peeler in the place after us?"

They marched on with their burden, the girl limping by the head of the box, keeping the cloth raised so that the man might breathe. Nobody followed them now.

As they came out on the piece of deserted ground, they saw the lorry standing there, the driver waiting by the horses' heads.

They slid the box on to the straw in the bottom and climbed in.

"We carn't go the strite wye along the Aldgate High Street and dahn the Minories—we've got to go through to Fenchurch Street and cut acrorst," said Graney. "They've got the sojers firing from the Tower, Fitz says—not many, for the authorities never thort of strengthening the guard till it was too late to get in

more men. But we're not takin' chawnces. Better keep away from the mob too as much as we can—we must go rahnd by Bleak Street."

Slowly they rumbled along the Mile End Road and Whitechapel Road, each moment fearing to be stopped, but the streets were deserted. They had just passed Leman Street, when an undersized man, a kind of stained dishclout about his head, scuttled past like a frightened rabbit, his head and ears back, shouting—"The sojers! the sojers!" Vainly Graney asked him what he meant, but he ran on shouting mechanically—"The sojers! the sojers!"

The tramp of men came to them. "Turn!" cried Graney, wrenching the horses round. "Dahn Whelk Lane—it's our only chance."

The horses were sent at the hand-gallop back along the main road and down the next lane. They had gone half its length, when a man who was passing cried—"Go back Fitz—they're working round the back down there to get behind the men on the Hill."

"We've only one way out," said Graney. "We must go strite for the 'ill and fice the music there. We may get through yet."

They reached the approach to Tower Hill without hindrance, but across the face of the sun, now rising crimson and angry over the roof-tops, there came the sound of firing, which rapidly became a fusillade, incessant and furious.

As they drew nearer, there was a buzzing in the air, and past them, flying singly, came ragged, pasty-faced men, some with their heads and arms bound up—one of them scuttering along silently, his hand over his face, the blood trickling between his outstretched fingers as he ran.

"More direct action," said Graney, twisting his mouth into a smile.

The man in the box began to stir uneasily as the shots came to his ears. "Turn back," Destin called to the driver. "Get out of this."

It was too late. The crowd streamed past them ever more thickly. Now there were women in it.

They fought their way to the opening on to the Hill, where some men and women were beginning to throw up a barricade across the street to meet the soldiers coming round behind. But as fast as they reared it, they and it were swept away by the rush of the crowd, which packed the clearing of the Hill.

The houses lining the approaches on the other side, held by the mob, were vomiting flame from behind their boarded windows, whilst they could see the men lying behind the barricades which had been erected across the streets, loading and firing irregularly at the invisible enemy. Men were even firing from the roof parapets, and they could see the flakes of mortar dropping silently under the impact of the bullets from underneath.

The streaming movement had checked. Now they were jammed in the mass which, for some reason, was beginning to press back on them. Destin stood up to look for the cause, when "The sojers! the sojers!" was shouted from behind. "We're trapped! Trapped!" The cry ran along and surged about them.

"Trapped! Trapped!"

From where he stood in the lorry, he could see the faces about him, pale with anger and terror—the eyes turning this way and that—seeking escape. A whispering came to them, which quickly rose to a scream.

The man in the box began to call out and struggled upwards, Destin and Graney trying to hold him down. But he fought the cloth away. "Christ! take it away—do you want to smother me? Holy Virgin! take it away," he screamed. The girl soothed him for a moment.

"There's Creegan's donah!" a man cried, pointing to

the girl. "There's the bloody woman whose man drove us on to the sojers' bayonets. W'ere's Creegan?" he screamed. "Creegan!"

"Creegan! Creegan! Creegan!" was taken up.

"There's Destin! Where's Creegan? Where's the bloody traitor that led us into this? Creegan! Creegan!"

The crowd halted at the cry, being blocked in the place with the lorry.

"Who calls me?" shouted Creegan.

In vain did Destin and Graney, with Fitz, try to hold him down on his bed. He sat up like a dead man resurrecting himself, the shawl hanging about him shroud-like.

"Here I am boys. The Invincibles for ever!" he cried and collapsed.

But the crowd had caught sight of him.

"There's the whoreson who led us on to this. Be Christ! he ought to be crucified!"

The cry came from a red fury of a woman, her bodice half torn from her shoulders, showing the yellow of her bosom.

"Crucify him! Crucify him!" screamed the crowd.

The word ran along the packed masses in the street, who shouted, without knowing why.

"Crucify him! Crucify him!"

The rush had come. Destin and the girl went down under the first onslaught. Graney and Red Fitz with the driver were swept over and into the crowd. The black box was dragged out and carried shoulder-high towards the stone plinth on the hill, leaving the man and the girl together.

In a moment two black shutters had appeared, with hammers and nails, taken from the barricades. The sound of hammering was heard, and, pinioned there, Destin and the girl saw what was to come.

The shutters, in the form of a Maltese cross, were laid down on the stones and the man, now quiet, was taken out of his shell and placed on the cross. They heard the crushing, beating sound, and the cross was upreared on the plinth in the crimsoning sun.

The great gaunt figure hung there, the hands nailed, the feet lashed.

The grey head hung over—the eyes looked downwards on the upturned faces.

Once the great chest lifted itself away from the cross, the head turning upwards. Then again. . . . Once more the head had risen and then had fallen into the shadows of death.

* * * * *

Destin, his arms about the girl, stood there, his eyes on the plinth. The girl had clung to his neck.

"Denis, Denis," she said. . . .

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